A Girl of the Limberlost

BRYANT JUNIOR HIGH SCHOOL

A GIRL OF THE LIMBERLOST

Gene Stratton-Porter

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To
all girls of the Limberlost
in general
and one
JEANNETTE HELEN PORTER
in particular

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Characters

LNORA, who collects moths to pay for her education, and lives the Golden Rule.

HILIP AMMON, who assists in moth hunting, and gains a new conception of love.

IRS. COMSTOCK, who lost a delusion and found a treasure.

ESLEY SINTON, who always did his best.

ARGARET SINTON, who "mothers" Elnora.

ILLY, a boy from real life.

DITH CARR, who discovers herself.

ART HENDERSON, to whom love means all things.

OLLY AMMON, who pays an old score.

OM LEVERING, engaged to Polly.

ERENCE O'MORE, Freckles grown tall.

IRS. O'MORE, who remained the Angel.

ERENCE, ALICE and LITTLE BROTHER, the O'MORE children.

A Girl of the Limberlost

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BRYANT

CHAPTER I

Wherein Elnora Goes to High School and Learns Many Lessons Not Found in Her Books

ELNORA COMSTOCK, have you lost your senses?" demanded the ngry voice of Katharine Comstock while she glared at her daugh-r.

"Why, mother!" faltered the girl.

"Don't you 'why, mother' me!" cried Mrs. Comstock. "You now very well what I mean. You've given me no peace until ou've had your way about this going to school business; I've xed you good enough, and you're ready to start. But no child mine walks the streets of Onabasha looking like a play-actress oman. You wet your hair and comb it down modest and decent nd then be off, or you'll have no time to find where you belong."

Elnora gave one despairing glance at the white face, framed in most becoming riot of reddish-brown hair, which she saw in the ttle kitchen mirror. Then she untied the narrow black ribbon, et the comb and plastered the waving curls close to her head, ound them fast, pinned on the skimpy black hat and opened the ack door.

"You've gone so plumb daffy you are forgetting your dinner," ered her mother.

"I don't want anything to eat," replied Elnora.

"You'll take your dinner or you'll not go one step. Are you razy? Walk almost three miles and no food from six in the morn-g until six at night. A pretty figure you'd cut if you had your

way! And after I've gone and bought you this nice new pail an filled it especial to start on!"

Elnora came back with a face still whiter and picked up th lunch. "Thank you, mother! Good-bye!" she said. Mrs. Com stock did not reply. She watched the girl follow the long walk t the gate and go from sight on the road, in the bright sunshine o the first Monday of September.

"I bet a dollar she gets enough of it by night!" commente Mrs. Comstock.

Elnora walked by instinct, for her eyes were blinded with tear She left the road where it turned south at the corner of the Lim berlost, climbed a snake fence and entered a path worn by he own feet. Dodging under willow and scrub oak branches she cam at last to the faint outline of an old trail made in the days whe the precious timber of the swamp was guarded by armed men This path she followed until she reached a thick clump of bushe From the debris in the end of a hollow log she took a key that un locked the padlock of a large weather-beaten old box, inside o which lay several books, a butterfly apparatus, and a sma cracked mirror. The walls were lined thickly with gaudy butte flies, dragonflies, and moths. She set up the mirror and once mor pulling the ribbon from her hair, she shook the bright mass ove her shoulders, tossing it dry in the sunshine. Then she straight ened it, bound it loosely, and replaced her hat. She tugged vainl at the low brown calico collar and gazed despairingly at the gen erous length of the narrow skirt. She lifted it as she would hav cut it if possible. That disclosed the heavy high leather shoes, a sight of which she seemed positively ill, and hastily dropped th skirt. She opened the pail, removed the lunch, wrapped it in th napkin, and placed it in a small pasteboard box. Locking th case again she hid the key and hurried down the trail.

She followed it around the north end of the swamp and the entered a footpath crossing a farm leading in the direction of th spires of the city to the northeast. Again she climbed a fence an was on the open road. For an instant she leaned against the fenc staring before her, then turned and looked back. Behind her la the land on which she had been born to drudgery and a mothe

ho made no pretence of loving her; before her lay the city rough whose schools she hoped to find means of escape and the ay to reach the things for which she cared. When she thought how she appeared she leaned more heavily against the fence id groaned; when she thought of turning back and wearing ch clothing in ignorance all the days of her life, she set her teeth mly and went hastily toward Onabasha.

On the bridge crossing a deep culvert at the suburbs she anced around, and then kneeling she thrust the lunch box be-veen the foundation and the flooring. This left her empty-anded as she approached the big stone high school building. She tered bravely and inquired her way to the office of the super-tendent. There she learned that she should have come the pre-ous week and arranged about her classes. There were many ings incident to the opening of school, and one man unable to pe with all of them.

"Where have you been attending school?" he asked, while he lvised the teacher of Domestic Science not to telephone for oceries until she knew how many she would have in her classes; rote an order for chemicals for the students of science; and lvised the leader of the orchestra to hire a professional to take e place of the bass violist, reported suddenly ill.

"I finished last spring at Brushwood school, district number ne," said Elnora. "I have been studying all summer. I am quite re I can do the first year work, if I have a few days to get arted."

"Of course, of course," assented the superintendent. "Almost variably country pupils do good work. You may enter first year, id if it is too difficult, we will find it out speedily. Your teachers ill tell you the list of books you must have, and if you will come ith me I will show you the way to the auditorium. It is now time r opening exercises. Take any seat you find vacant."

Elnora stood before the entrance and stared into the largest om she ever had seen. The floor sloped to a yawning stage n which a band of musicians, grouped around a grand piano, ere tuning their instruments. She had two fleeting impres-ons. That it was all a mistake; this was no school, but a

grand display of enormous ribbon bows; and the second, th she was sinking, and had forgotten how to walk. Then a bu from the orchestra nerved her while a bevy of daintily cla sweet-smelling things that might have been birds, or flowers, possibly gaily dressed, happy young girls, pushed her forwar She found herself plodding across the back of the auditoriu praying for guidance, to an empty seat.

As the girls passed her, vacancies seemed to open to me them. Their friends were moving over, beckoning and whispe ing invitations. Everyone else was seated, but no one paid a attention to the white-faced girl stumbling half-blindly down t aisle next the farthest wall. So she went on to the very end faci the stage. No one moved, and she could not summon courage crowd past others to several empty seats she saw. At the end the aisle she paused in desperation, while she stared back at t whole forest of faces most of which were now turned upon h

In a flash came the full realization of her scanty dress, h pitiful little hat and ribbon, her big, heavy shoes, her ignoran of where to go or what to do; and from a sickening wave whi crept over her, she felt she was going to become very ill. Then o of the mass she saw a pair of big, brown boy eyes, three seats fro her, and there was a message in them. Without moving his bo he reached forward and with a pencil touched the back of t seat before him. Instantly Elnora took another step which broug her to a row of vacant front seats.

She heard laughter behind her; the knowledge that she wo the only hat in the room burned her; every matter of momen and some of none at all, cut and stung. She had no books. Whe should she go when this was over? What would she give to be the trail going home! She was shaking with a nervous chill wh the music ceased, and the superintendent arose, and comi down to the front of the flower-decked platform, opened a Bib and began to read. Elnora did not know what he was readin and she felt that she did not care. Wildly she was racking h brain to decide whether she should sit still when the others l the room or follow, and ask someone where the Freshmen we first.

In the midst of the struggle one sentence fell on her ear. "Hide
e under the shadow of Thy wings."
Elnora began to pray frantically. "Hide me, O God, hide me,
der the shadow of Thy wings."
Again and again she implored that prayer, and before she
alized what was coming, everyone had arisen and the room was
ptying rapidly. Elnora hurried after the nearest girl and in the
ess at the door touched her sleeve timidly.
"Will you please tell me where the Freshmen go?" she asked
skily.
The girl gave her one surprised glance, and drew away.
"Same place as the fresh women," she answered, and those
arest her laughed.
Elnora stopped praying suddenly and the color crept into her
e. "I'll wager you are the first person I meet when I find it,"
e said and stopped short. "Not that! Oh, I must not do that!"
e thought in dismay. "Make an enemy the first thing I do. Oh,
t that!"
She followed with her eyes as the young people separated in
e hall, some climbing stairs, some disappearing down side halls,
me entering adjoining doors. She saw the girl overtake the
own-eyed boy and speak to him. He glanced back at Elnora
th a scowl on his face. Then she stood alone in the hall.
Presently a door opened and a young woman came out and
tered another room. Elnora waited until she returned, and
rried to her. "Would you tell me where the Freshmen are?"
e panted.
"Straight down the hall, three doors to your left," was the
swer, as the girl passed.
"One minute please, oh please," begged Elnora. "Should I
ock or just open the door?"
"Go in and take a seat," replied the teacher.
"What if there aren't any seats?" gasped Elnora.
"Classrooms are never half-filled, there will be plenty," was the
swer.
Elnora removed her hat. There was no place to put it, so she
rried it in her hand. She looked infinitely better without it.

After several efforts she at last opened the door and stepping i
side faced a smaller and more concentrated battery of eyes.

"The superintendent sent me. He thinks I belong here," s
said to the professor in charge of the class, but she never befo
heard the voice with which she spoke. As she stood waiting, t
girl of the hall passed on her way to the blackboard, and su
pressed laughter told Elnora that her thrust had been repeated.

"Be seated," said the professor, and then because he sa
Elnora was desperately embarrassed he proceeded to lend her
book and to ask her if she had studied algebra. She said she h
a little, but not the same book they were using. He asked her if s
felt that she could do the work they were beginning, and she sa
she did.

That was how it happened, that three minutes after enteri
the room she was told to take her place beside the girl who h
gone last to the board, and whose flushed face and angry ey
avoided meeting Elnora's. Being compelled to concentrate on h
proposition she forgot herself. When the professor asked that
pupils sign their work she firmly wrote "Elnora Comstock" und
her demonstration. Then she took her seat and waited with whi
lips and trembling limbs, as one after another the professor call
the names on the board, while their owners arose and explain
their propositions, or "flunked" if they had not found a corre
solution. She was so eager to catch their forms of expression a
prepare herself for her recitation, that she never looked from t
work on the board, until clearly and distinctly, "Elnora Cor
stock," called the professor.

The dazed girl stared at the board. One tiny curl added to t
top of the first curve of the m in her name, had transformed
from a good old English patronymic that any girl might be
proudly, to Cornstock. Elnora sat speechless. When and how d
it happen? She could feel the wave of smothered laughter in t
air around her. A rush of anger turned her face scarlet and h
soul sick. The voice of the professor addressed her directly.

"This proposition seems to be beautifully demonstrated, M
Cornstalk," he said. "Surely, you can tell us how you did it."

That word of praise saved her. She could do good work. Th

ight wear their pretty clothes, have their friends and make life greater misery than it ever before had been for her, but not one them should do better work or be more womanly. That lay ith her. She was tall, straight, and handsome as she arose.

"Of course I can explain my work," she said in natural tones. What I can't explain is how I happened to be so stupid as to ake a mistake in writing my own name. I must have been a little ervous. Please excuse me."

She went to the board, swept off the signature with one stroke, en rewrote it plainly. "My name is Comstock," she said dis-nctly. She returned to her seat and following the formula used the others made her first high school recitation.

As Elnora resumed her seat Professor Henley looked at her eadily. "It puzzles me," he said deliberately, "how you can rite as beautiful a demonstration, and explain it as clearly as er has been done in any of my classes and still be so disturbed to make a mistake in your own name. Are you very sure you d that yourself, Miss Comstock?"

"It is impossible that anyone else should have done it," an-vered Elnora.

"I am very glad you think so," said the professor. "Being Fresh-en, all of you are strangers to me. I should dislike to begin the ar with you feeling there was one among you small enough to a trick like that. The next proposition, please."

When the hour had gone the class filed back to the study room nd Elnora followed in desperation, because she did not know here else to go. She could not study as she had no books, and hen the class again left the room to go to another professor for e next recitation, she went also. At least they could put her out she did not belong there. Noon came at last, and she kept with e others until they dispersed on the sidewalk. She was so ab-ormally self-conscious she fancied all the hundreds of that ughing throng saw and jested at her. When she passed the rown-eyed boy walking with the girl of her encounter she knew, r she heard him say: "Did you really let that gawky piece of lico get ahead of you?" The answer was indistinct.

Elnora hurried from the city. She intended to get her lunch,

eat it in the shade of the first tree, and then decide whether s
would go back or go home. She knelt on the bridge and reach
for her box, but it was so very light that she was prepared for t
fact that it was empty, before opening it. There was one thing f
which to be thankful. The boy or tramp who had seen her hide
had left the napkin. She would not have to face her mother a
account for its loss. She put it in her pocket, and threw the b
into the ditch. Then she sat on the bridge and tried to think, b
her brain was confused.

"Perhaps the worst is over," she said at last. "I will go bac
What would mother say to me if I came home now?"

So she returned to the high school, followed some other pup
to the coat room, hung her hat, and found her way to the stu
where she had been in the morning. Twice that afternoon, wi
aching head and empty stomach, she faced strange professors,
different branches. Once she escaped notice; the second time t
worst happened. She was asked a question she could not answ

"Have you not decided on your course, and secured yo
books?" inquired the professor.

"I have decided on my course," replied Elnora, "I do n
know where to ask for my books."

"Ask?" the professor was bewildered.

"I understood the books were furnished," faltered Elnora.

"Only to those bringing an order from the township trustee
replied the Professor.

"No! Oh no!" cried Elnora. "I will have them tomorrow
and gripped her desk for support for she knew that was not tr
Four books, ranging perhaps at a dollar and a half apiece; wou
her mother buy them? Of course she would not—could not.

Did not Elnora know the story of old. There was enough lan
but no one to do clearing and farm. Tax on all those acres,
cently the new gravel road tax added, the expense of living a
only the work of two women to meet all of it. She was insane
think she could come to the city to school. Her mother had be
right. The girl decided that if only she lived to reach home, s
would stay there and lead any sort of life to avoid more of t
torture. Bad as what she wished to escape had been, it was no

g like this. She never could live down the movement that went rough the class when she inadvertently revealed the fact that e had expected books to be furnished. Her mother would not cure them; that settled the question.

But the end of misery is never in a hurry to come; before the y was over the superintendent entered the room and ex- ained that pupils from the country were charged a tuition of enty dollars a year. That really was the end. Previously Elnora d canvassed a dozen methods for securing the money for books, nging all the way from offering to wash the superintendent's shes to breaking into the bank. This additional expense made r plans so wildly impossible, there was nothing to do but hold her head until she was from sight.

Down the long corridor alone among hundreds, down the long eet alone among thousands, out into the country she came at st. Across the fence and field, along the old trail once trodden a boy's bitter agony, now stumbled a white-faced girl, sick at art. She sat on a log and began to sob in spite of her efforts at f-control. At first it was physical breakdown, later, thought me crowding.

Oh the shame, the mortification! Why had she not known of e tuition? How did she happen to think that in the city books ere furnished? Perhaps it was because she had read they were in veral states. But why did she not know? Why did not her mother with her? Other mothers—but when had her mother ever been done anything at all like other mothers? Because she never d been it was useless to blame her now. Elnora realized she ould have gone to town the week before, called on someone d learned all these things herself. She should have remembered w her clothing would look, before she wore it in public places. ow she knew, and her dreams were over. She must go home to ed chickens, calves, and pigs, wear calico and coarse shoes, and th averted head, pass a library all her life. She sobbed again. "For pity's sake, honey, what's the matter?" asked the voice of e nearest neighbor, Wesley Sinton, as he seated himself beside nora. "There, there," he continued, smearing tears all over her ce in an effort to dry them. "Was it as bad as that, now? Mag-

gie has been just wild over you all day. She's got nervouser eve minute. She said we were foolish to let you go. She said yo clothes were not right, you ought not to carry that tin pail, a that they would laugh at you. By gum, I see they did!"

"Oh, Uncle Wesley," sobbed the girl, "why didn't she tell me

"Well, you see, Elnora, she didn't like to. You got such a wa of holding up your head, and going through with things. S thought some way that you'd make it, till you got started, a then she begun to see a hundred things we should have done. reckon you hadn't reached that building before she remembere that your skirt should have been pleated instead of gathered, yo shoes been low, and lighter for hot September weather, and a ne hat. Were your clothes right, Elnora?"

The girl broke into hysterical laughter. "Right!" she crie "Right! Uncle Wesley, you should have seen me among the I was a picture! They'll never forget me. No, they won't get t chance, for they'll see me again tomorrow!"

"Now that is what I call spunk, Elnora! Downright grit," sa Wesley Sinton. "Don't you let them laugh you out. You've helpe Margaret and me for years at harvest and busy times, what you' earned must amount to quite a sum. You can get yourself a goo many clothes with it."

"Don't mention clothes, Uncle Wesley," sobbed Elnora. don't care now how I look. If I don't go back all of them w know it's because I am so poor I can't buy my books."

"Oh, I don't know as you are so dratted poor," said Sint meditatively. "There are three hundred acres of good land, wi fine timber as ever grew on it."

"It takes all we can earn to pay the tax, and mother wouldn cut a tree for her life."

"Well then, maybe, I'll be compelled to cut one for her," su gested Sinton. "Anyway, stop tearing yourself to pieces and t me. If it isn't clothes, what is it?"

"It's books and tuition. Over twenty dollars in all."

"Humph! First time I ever knew you to be stumped by twen dollars, Elnora," said Sinton, patting her hand.

"It's the first time you ever knew me to want money," a

vered Elnora. "This is different from anything that ever hap-
ened to me. Oh, how can I get it, Uncle Wesley?"

"Drive to town with me in the morning and I'll draw it from
e bank for you. I owe you every cent of it."

"You know you don't owe me a penny, and I wouldn't touch
ne from you, unless I really could earn it. For anything that's
ast I owe you and Aunt Margaret for all the home life and love
ve ever known. I know how you work, and I'll not take your
oney."

"Just a loan, Elnora, just a loan for a little while until you can
rn it. You can be proud with all the rest of the world, but there
e no secrets between us, are there, Elnora?"

"No," said Elnora, "there are none. You and Aunt Margaret
ave given me all the love there has been in my life. That is the
ne reason above all others why you shall not give me charity.
and me money because you find me crying for it! This isn't the
st time this old trail has known tears and heartache. All of us
now that story. Freckles stuck to what he undertook and won
t. I stick, too. When Duncan moved away he gave me all
reckles left in the swamp, and as I have inherited his property
aybe his luck will come with it. I won't touch your money, but
ll win some way. First, I'm going home and try mother. It's just
ossible I could find second-hand books, and perhaps all the tui-
on need not be paid at once. Maybe they would accept it quar-
rly. But oh, Uncle Wesley, you and Aunt Margaret keep on
ving me! I'm so lonely, and no one else cares!"

Wesley Sinton's jaws met with a click. He swallowed hard on
tter words and changed what he would have liked to say three
mes before it became articulate.

"Elnora," he said at last, "if it hadn't been for one thing I'd
ave tried to take legal steps to make you ours when you were
ree years old. Maggie said then it wasn't any use, but I've
ways held on. You see, I was the first man there, honey, and
ere are things you see, that you can't ever make anybody else
nderstand. She loved him, Elnora, she just made an idol of him.
here was that oozy green hole, with the thick scum broke, and
vo or three big bubbles slowly rising that were the breath of his

body. There she was in spasms of agony, and beside her the grea heavy log she'd tried to throw him. I can't ever forgive her fo turning against you, and spoiling your childhood as she has, bu I couldn't forgive anybody else for abusing her. Maggie has gc no mercy on her, but Maggie didn't see what I did, and I've neve tried to make it very clear to her. It's been a little too plain fo me ever since. Whenever I look at your mother's face, I see wha she saw, so I hold my tongue and say, in my heart, 'Give her mite more time.' Some day it will come. She does love you Elnora. Everybody does, honey. It's just that she's feeling s much, she can't express herself. You be a patient girl and wait little longer. After all, she's your mother, and you're all she's got but a memory, and it might do her good to let her know that sh was fooled in that."

"It would kill her!" cried the girl swiftly. "Uncle Wesley, i would kill her! What do you mean?"

"Nothing," said Wesley Sinton soothingly. "Nothing, honey That was just one of them fool things a man says, when he is try ing his best to be wise. You see, she loved him mightily, an they'd been married only a year, and what she was loving wa what she thought he was. She hadn't really got acquainted wit the man yet. If it had been even one more year, she could hav borne it, and you'd have got justice. Having been a teacher sh was better educated and smarter than the rest of us, and so sh was more sensitive like. She can't understand she was loving dream. So I say it might do her good if somebody that knew could tell her, but I swear to gracious, I never could. I've hear her out at the edge of that quagmire calling in them wild spell of hers off and on for the last sixteen years, and imploring th swamp to give him back to her, and I've got out of bed when was pretty tired, and come down to see she didn't go in herself or harm you. What she feels is too deep for me. I've got to re spectin' her grief, and I can't get over it. Go home and tell you ma, honey, and ask her nice and kind to help you. If she won' then you got to swallow that little lump of pride in your neck and come to Aunt Maggie, like you been a-coming all you life."

"I'll ask mother, but I can't take your money, Uncle Wesley, ideed I can't. I'll wait a year, and earn some, and enter next ear."

"There's one thing you don't consider, Elnora," said the man rnestly. "And that's what you are to Maggie. She's a little like our ma. She hasn't given up to it, and she's struggling on brave, ut when we buried our second little girl the light went out of Iaggie's eyes, and it's not come back. The only time I ever see a nt of it is when she thinks she's done something that makes you appy, Elnora. Now, you go easy about refusing her anything e wants to do for you. There's times in this world when it's our ounden duty to forget ourselves, and think what will help other eople. Young woman, you owe me and Maggie all the comfort e can get out of you. There's the two of our own we can't ever o anything for. Don't you get the idea into your head that a fool ing you call pride is going to cut us out of all the pleasure we ave in life beside ourselves."

"Uncle Wesley, you are a dear," said Elnora. "Just a dear! If can't possibly get that money any way else on earth, I'll come nd borrow it of you, and then I'll pay it back if I must dig ferns om the swamp and sell them from door to door in the city. I'll ven plant them, so that they will be sure to come up in the ring. I have been sort of panic-stricken all day and couldn't ink. I can gather nuts and sell them. Freckles sold moths and tterflies, and I've a lot collected. Of course, I am going back morrow! I can find a way to get the books. Don't you worry out me. I am all right!"

"Now, what do you think of that?" inquired Wesley Sinton of e swamp in general. "Here's our Elnora come back to stay. ead high and right as a trivet! You've named three ways in ree minutes that you could earn ten dollars, which I figure ould be enough to start you. Let's go to supper and stop worry-g!"

Elnora unlocked the case, took out the pail, put the napkin in , pulled the ribbon from her hair, binding it down tightly again nd followed to the road. From afar she could see her mother in e doorway. She blinked her eyes, and tried to smile as she an-

swered Wesley Sinton, and indeed she did feel better. She kne now what she had to expect, where to go, and what to do. G the books she must; when she had them, she would show tho city girls and boys how to prepare and recite lessons, how walk with a brave heart; and they could show her how to we pretty clothes and have good times.

As she neared the door her mother reached for the pail. "I fo got to tell you to bring home your scraps for the chickens," sh said.

Elnora entered. "There weren't any scraps, and I'm hung again as I ever was in my life."

"I thought likely you would be," said Mrs. Comstock, "ar so I got supper ready. We can eat first, and do the work afte ward. What kept you so? I expected you an hour ago."

Elnora looked into her mother's face and smiled. It was a que sort of a little smile, and would have reached the depths with ar normal mother.

"I see you've been bawling," said Mrs. Comstock. "I thoug you'd get your fill in a hurry. That's why I wouldn't go to any e pense. If we keep out of the poorhouse we have to cut the corne close. It's likely this Brushwood road tax will eat up all we' saved in years. Where the land tax is to come from I don't kno It gets bigger every year. If they are going to dredge the swam ditch again they'll just have to take the land to pay for it. I can that's all! We'll get up early in the morning and gather and hu the beans for winter, and put in the rest of the day hoeing th turnips."

Elnora again smiled that pitiful smile.

"Do you think I didn't know that I was funny and would laughed at?" she asked.

"Funny?" cried Mrs. Comstock hotly.

"Yes, funny! A regular caricature," answered Elnora. "N one else wore calico, not even one other. No one else wore hig heavy shoes, not even one. No one else had such a funny litt old hat; my hair was not right, my ribbon invisible compare with the others, I did not know where to go, or what to do, ar I had no books. What a spectacle I made for them!" Elno

ughed nervously at her own picture. "But there are always two
les! The professor said in the algebra class that he never had
better solution and explanation than mine of the proposition he
ve me, which scored one for me in spite of my clothes."
"Well, I wouldn't brag on myself!"
"That was poor taste," admitted Elnora. "But, you see, it is a
se of whistling to keep up my courage. I honestly could see that
would have looked just as well as the rest of them if I had been
essed as they were. We can't afford that, so I have to find some-
ng else to brace me. It was rather bad, mother!"
"Well, I'm glad you got enough of it!"
"Oh, but I haven't!" hurried in Elnora. "I just got a start.
he hardest is over. Tomorrow they won't be surprised. They
ll know what to expect. I am sorry to hear about the dredge.
it really going through?"
"Yes. I got my notification today. The tax will be something
ormous. I don't know as I can spare you, even if you are willing
be a laughing-stock for the town."
With every bite Elnora's courage returned, for she was a
althy young thing.
"You've heard about doing evil that good might come from
' she said. "Well, mother mine, it's something like that with
e. I'm willing to bear the hard part to pay for what I'll learn.
ready I have selected the ward building in which I shall teach
about four years. I am going to ask for a room with a south
posure so that the flowers and moths I take in from the swamp
show the children will do well."
"You little idiot!" said Mrs. Comstock. "How are you going
pay your expenses?"
"Now that is just what I was going to ask you!" said Elnora.
ou see, I have had two startling pieces of news today. I did
t know I would need any money. I thought the city furnished
e books, and there is an out-of-town tuition, also. I need ten
llars in the morning. Will you please let me have it?"
"Ten dollars!" cried Mrs. Comstock. "Ten dollars! Why don't
u say a hundred and be done with it! I could get one as easy as
e other. I told you! I told you I couldn't raise a cent. Every

year expenses grow bigger and bigger. I told you not to ask f money!"

"I never meant to," replied Elnora. "I thought clothes we all I needed and I could bear them. I never knew about buyi books and tuition."

"Well, I did!" said Mrs. Comstock. "I knew what you wou run into! But you are so bulldog stubborn, and so set in yo way, I thought I would just let you try the world a little and s how you liked it!"

Elnora pushed back her chair and looked at her mother.

"Do you mean to say," she demanded, "that you knew, wh you let me go into a city classroom and reveal the fact before of them that I expected to have my books handed out to m do you mean to say that you knew I had to pay for them?"

Mrs. Comstock evaded the direct question.

"Anybody but an idiot mooning over a book or wasting tin prowling the woods would have known you had to pay. Ever body has to pay for everything. Life is made up of pay, pay, pa It's always and forever pay! If you don't pay one way you another! Of course, I knew you had to pay. Of course, I kne you would come home blubbering! But you don't get a penny! haven't one cent, and can't get one! Have your way if you a determined, but I think you will find the road somewhat rocky

"Swampy, you mean, mother," corrected Elnora. She aro white and trembling. "Perhaps some day God will teach me ho to understand you. He knows I do not now. You can't possib realize just what you let me go through today, or how you l me go, but I'll tell you this: You understand enough that if yo had the money, and would offer it to me, I wouldn't touch it nov And I'll tell you this much more. I'll get it myself. I'll raise i and do it some honest way. I am going back tomorrow, the ne day, and the next. You need not come out, I'll do the night wor and hoe the turnips."

It was ten o'clock when the chickens, pigs, and cattle wer fed, the turnips hoed, and a heap of bean vines was stacked besid the back door.

CHAPTER II

Wherein Wesley and Margaret Go Shopping, and Elnora's Wardrobe Is Replenished

ESLEY SINTON walked down the road half a mile and turned the lane leading to his home. His heart was hot and filled with dignation. He had told Elnora he did not blame her mother, t he did. His wife met him at the door.

"Did you see anything of Elnora?" she questioned.

"Most too much, Maggie," he answered. "What do you say going to town? There's a few things has to be got right away."

"Where did you see her, Wesley?"

"Along the old Limberlost trail, my girl, torn to pieces sobbing. er courage always has been fine, but the thing she met today as too much for her. We ought to have known better than to t her go that way. It wasn't only clothes; there were books, and trance fees for out-of-town people, that she didn't know about; hile there must have been jeers, whispers, and laughing. Maggie, feel as if I'd been a traitor to those girls of ours. I ought to ve gone in and seen about this school business. Don't cry, Iaggie. Get me some supper, and I'll hitch up and see what we n do now."

"What can we do, Wesley?"

"I don't just know. But we've got to do something. Kate Comock will be a handful, while Elnora will be two, but between we must see that the girl is not too hard pressed about money, nd that she is dressed so she is not ridiculous. She's saved us

the wages of a woman many a day, can't you make her so decent dresses?"

"Well, I'm not just what you call expert, but I could beat K Comstock all to pieces. I know that skirts should be pleated to band instead of gathered, and full enough to sit in, and sh enough to walk in. I could try. There are patterns for sale. L go right away, Wesley."

"Set me a bit of supper, while I hitch up."

Margaret built a fire, made coffee, and fried ham and eg She set out pie and cake and had enough for a hungry man the time the carriage was at the door, but she had no appeti She dressed while Wesley ate, put away the food while he dress and then they drove toward the city through the beautiful S tember evening, and as they went they planned for Elnora. T trouble was, not whether they were generous enough to buy wh she needed, but whether she would accept their purchases, a what her mother would say.

They went to a drygoods store and when a clerk asked wh they wanted to see neither of them knew, so they stepped asi and held a whispered consultation.

"What had we better get, Wesley?"

"Dresses," said Wesley promptly.

"But how many dresses, and what kind?"

"Blest if I know!" exclaimed Wesley. "I thought you wou manage that. I know about some things I'm going to get."

At that instant several high school girls came into the sto and approached them.

"There!" exclaimed Wesley breathlessly. "There, Maggie! Li them! That's what she needs! Buy like they have!"

Margaret stared. What did they wear? They were rapid passing; they seemed to have so much, and she could not deci so quickly. Before she knew it she was among them.

"I beg your pardon, but won't you wait one minute?" sh asked.

The girls stopped with wondering faces.

"It's your clothes," explained Mrs. Sinton. "You look ju beautiful to me. You look exactly as I should have wanted to s

girls. They both died of diphtheria when they were little, they had yellow hair, dark eyes and pink cheeks, and everyly thought they were lovely. If they had lived, they'd been near r age now, and I'd want them to look like you."

There was sympathy on every girl face.

"Why thank you!" said one of them. "We are very sorry for ."

"Of course you are," said Margaret. "Everybody always has n. And because I can't ever have the joy of a mother in think- for my girls and buying pretty things for them, there is hing left for me, but to do what I can for someone who has mother to care for her. I know a girl, who would be just as tty as any of you, if she had the clothes, but her mother does think about her, so I mother her some myself."

"She must be a lucky girl," said another.

"Oh, she loves me," said Margaret, "and I love her. I want to look just like you do. Please tell me about your clothes. these the dresses and hats you wear to school? What kind of ds are they, and where do you buy them?"

The girls began to laugh and cluster around Margaret. Wesley de down the store with his head high through pride in her, his heart was sore over the memory of two little faces der Brushwood sod. He inquired his way to the shoe department.

"Why, every one of us have on gingham or linen dresses," they d, "and they are our school clothes."

For a few moments there was a babel of laughing voices exining to the delighted Margaret that school dresses should be ght and pretty, but simple and plain, and until cold weather y should wash.

"I'll tell you," said Ellen Brownlee, "my father owns this store, now all the clerks. I'll take you to Miss Hartley. You tell just how much you want to spend, and what you want to buy, d she will know how to get the most for your money. I've heard pa say she was the best clerk in the store for people who didn't w precisely what they wanted."

"That's the very thing," agreed Margaret. "But before you go,

tell me about your hair. Elnora's hair is bright and wavy, yours is silky as hackled flax. How do you do it?"

"Elnora?" asked four girls in concert.

"Yes, Elnora is the name of the girl I want these things for.

"Did she come to the high school today?" questioned on them.

"Was she in your classes?" demanded Margaret without re

Four girls stood silent and thought fast. Had there bee strange girl among them, and had she been overlooked and pa by with indifference, because she was so very shabby? If had appeared as much better than they, as she had looked wo would her reception have been the same?

"There was a strange girl from the country in the Freshn class today," said Ellen Brownlee, "and her name was Elno

"That was the girl," said Margaret.

"Are her people so very poor?" questioned Ellen.

"No, not poor at all, come to think of it," answered Marga "It's a peculiar case. Mrs. Comstock had a great trouble and let it change her whole life and make a different woman of h She used to be lovely; now she is forever saving and scared death for fear they will go to the poorhouse; but there is a farm, covered with lots of good timber. The taxes are high women who can't manage to clear and work the land. Th ought to be enough to keep two of them in good shape all th lives, if they only knew how to do it. But no one ever told K Comstock anything, and never will, for she won't listen. All does is droop all day, and walk the edge of the swamp half night, and neglect Elnora. If you girls would make life just a li easier for her it would be the finest thing you ever did."

All of them promised they would.

"Now tell me about your hair," persisted Margaret Sinton.

So they took her to a toilet counter, and she bought the pro hair soap, also a nail file, and cold cream, for use after windy da Then they left her with the experienced clerk, and when at l Wesley found her she was loaded with bundles and the light other days was in her beautiful eyes. Wesley also carried so packages.

'Did you get any stockings?" he whispered.

"No, I didn't," she said. "I was so interested in dresses and r ribbons and a—a hat——" she hesitated and glanced at sley. "Of course, a hat!" prompted Wesley. "—that I forgot about those horrible shoes. She's got to have decent shoes, Wes-."

"Sure!" said Wesley. "She's got decent shoes. But the man d some brown stockings ought to go with them. Take a peep, l you!"

Wesley opened a box and displayed a pair of thick-soled, autifully shaped brown walking shoes of low cut. Margaret ed out with pleasure.

"But do you suppose they are the right size, Wesley? What d you get?"

"I just said for a girl of sixteen with a slender foot."

"Well, that's about as near as I could come. If they don't fit hen she tries them, we will drive straight in and change them. ome on now, let's get home."

All the way they discussed how they should give Elnora their rchases and what Mrs. Comstock would say.

"I am afraid she will be awful mad," said Margaret.

"She'll just rip!" replied Wesley graphically. "But if she wants leave the raising of her girl to the neighbors, she needn't get actious if they take some pride in doing a good job. From now I calculate Elnora shall go to school; and she shall have all the othes and books she needs, if I go around on the back of Kate omstock's land and cut a tree, or drive off a calf to pay for em. Why I know one tree she owns that would put Elnora in aven for a year. Just think of it, Margaret! It's not fair. One-ird of what is there belongs to Elnora by law, and if Kate omstock raises a row I'll tell her so, and see that the girl gets You go to see Kate in the morning, and I'll go with you. Tell er you want Elnora's pattern, that you are going to make her dress, for helping us. And sort of hint at a few more things. If ate balks, I'll take a hand and settle her. I'll go to law for lnora's share of that land and sell enough to educate her."

"Why, Wesley Sinton, you're perfectly wild."

"I'm not! Did you ever stop to think that such cases ar frequent there have been laws made to provide for them? I bring it up in court and force Kate to educate Elnora, board and clothe her till she's of age, and then she can take share."

"Wesley, Kate would go crazy!"

"She's crazy now. The idea of any mother living with as sv a girl as Elnora, and letting her suffer till I find her crying a funeral. It makes me fighting mad. All uncalled for. Not a gr of sense in it. I've offered and offered to oversee clearing land and working her fields. Let her sell a good tree, or a acres. Something is going to be done, right now. Elnora's b fairly happy up to this, but to spoil the school life she's plann is to ruin all her life. I won't have it! If Elnora won't take th things, so help me, I'll tell her what she is worth, and loan the money and she can pay me back when she comes of age. I going to have it out with Kate Comstock in the morning. H we are! You open up what you got while I put away the hor and then I'll show you."

When Wesley came from the barn Margaret had four pieces crisp gingham, a pale blue, a pink, a gray with green stripes a a rich brown and blue plaid. On each of them lay a yard an half of wide ribbon to match. There were handkerchiefs an brown leather belt. In her hands she held a wide-brimmed straw hat, having a high crown banded with velvet strips each which fastened with a tiny gold buckle.

"It looks kind of bare now," she explained. "It had three qu on it here."

"Did you have them taken off?" asked Wesley.

"Yes, I did. The price was two and a half for the hat, and th things were a dollar and a half apiece. I couldn't pay that."

"It does seem considerable," admitted Wesley, "but will look right without them?"

"No, it won't!" said Margaret. "It's going to have quills on Do you remember those beautiful peacock wing feathers th Phœbe Simms gave me? Three of them go on just where the came off, and nobody will ever know the difference. They mat

hat to a moral, and they are just a little longer and richer than ones that I had taken off. I was wondering whether I better them on tonight while I remember how they set, or wait till rning."

'Don't risk it!" exclaimed Wesley anxiously. "Don't you risk Sew them on right now!"

'Open your bundles, while I get the thread," said Margaret. Wesley unwrapped the shoes. Margaret took them up and ched the leather and stroked them.

'My, but they are fine!" she cried.

Wesley picked up one and slowly turned it in his big hands. glanced at his foot and back to the shoe.

'It's a little bit of a thing, Margaret," he said softly. "Like not I'll have to take it back. It seems as if it couldn't fit."

'It seems as if it didn't dare do anything else," said Margaret. hat's a happy little shoe to get the chance to carry as fine a l as Elnora to high school. Now what's in the other box?"

Wesley looked at Margaret doubtfully.

"Why," he said, "you know there's going to be rainy days, d those things she has now ain't fit for anything but to drive the cows——"

"Wesley, did you get high shoes, too?"

"Well, she ought to have them! The man said he would make em cheaper if I took both pairs at once."

Margaret laughed aloud. "Those will do her past Christmas," exulted. "What else did you buy?"

"Well sir," said Wesley, "I saw something today. You told about Kate getting that tin pail for Elnora to carry to high hool and you said you told her it was a shame. I guess Elnora s ashamed all right, for tonight she stopped at the old case ncan gave her, and took out that pail, where it had been all y, and put a napkin inside it. Coming home she confessed she s half starved because she hid her dinner under a culvert, d a tramp took it. She hadn't had a bite to eat the whole day. t she never complained at all, she was pleased that she hadn't t the napkin. So I just inquired around till I found this, and hink it's about the ticket."

Wesley opened the package and laid a brown leather lu box on the table. "Might be a couple of books, or drawing t or most anything that's neat and genteel. You see, it opens way."

It did open, and inside was a space for sandwiches, a li porcelain box for cold meat or fried chicken, another for sal a glass with a lid which screwed on, held by a ring in a cor for custard or jelly, a flask for tea or milk, a beautiful little kn fork, and spoon fastened in holders, and a place for a napkin

Margaret was almost crying over it.

"How I'd love to fill it!" she exclaimed.

"Do it the first time, just to show Kate Comstock what love i said Wesley. "Get up early in the morning and make one those dresses tomorrow. Can't you make a plain gingham d in a day? I'll pick a chicken, and you fry it and fix a little c tard for the cup, and do it up brown. Go on, Maggie, you do i

"I never can," said Margaret. "I am slow as the itch abo sewing, and these are not going to be plain dresses when comes to making them. There are going to be edgings of pla green, pink, and brown to the bias strips, and tucks and ple around the hips, fancy belts and collars, and all of it takes tim

"Then Kate Comstock's got to help," said Wesley. "Can t two of you make one, and get that lunch tomorrow?"

"Easy, but she'll never do it!"

"You see if she doesn't!" said Wesley. "You get up a cut it out, and soon as Elnora is gone I'll go after Kate myse She'll take what I'll say better alone. But she'll come, and she help make the dress. These other things are our Christmas gifts Elnora. She'll no doubt need them more now than she will the and we can give them just as well. That's yours, and this is mi or whichever way you choose."

Wesley untied a good brown umbrella and shook out t folds of a long, brown raincoat. Margaret dropped the ha arose and took the coat. She tried it on, felt it, cooed over it a matched it with the umbrella.

"Did it look anything like rain tonight?" she inquired anxiously that Wesley laughed.

"And this last bundle?" she said, dropping back in her chair, e coat still over her shoulders.

"I couldn't buy this much stuff for any other woman and othing for my own," said Wesley. "It's Christmas for you, too, argaret!" He shook out fold after fold of soft gray satiny goods at would look lovely against Margaret's pink cheeks and whiten- g hair.

"Oh, you old darling!" she exclaimed, and fled sobbing into s arms.

But she soon dried her eyes, raked together the coals in the oking stove and boiled one of the dress patterns in salt water for lf an hour. Wesley held the lamp while she hung the goods on e line to dry. Then she set the irons on the stove so they would hot the first thing in the morning.

CHAPTER III

Wherein Elnora Visits the Bird Woman and Opens a Bank Account

At four o'clock the following morning Elnora was shelling bea
At six she fed the chickens and pigs, swept two of the rooms of
cabin, built a fire, and put on the kettle for breakfast. Then
climbed the narrow stairs to the attic she had occupied si
a very small child, and dressed in the hated shoes and bro
calico, plastered down her crisp curls, ate what breakfast
could, and pinning on her hat, started for town.

"There is no sense in your going for an hour yet," said
mother.

"I must try to discover some way to earn those books," repl
Elnora. "I am perfectly positive I shall not find them lying bes
the road wrapped in tissue paper, and tagged with my name."

She went toward the city as on yesterday. Her perplexity
to where tuition and books were to come from was worse but
did not feel quite so badly. She never again would have to fa
all of it for the first time. There had been times yesterday wh
she had prayed to be hidden, or to drop dead, and neither h
happened. "I believe the best way to get an answer to prayer
to work for it," muttered Elnora grimly.

Again she followed the trail to the swamp, rearranged her h
and left the tin pail. This time she folded a couple of sandwic
in the napkin, and tied them in a neat light paper parcel whi
she carried in her hand. Then she hurried along the road
Onabasha and found a bookstore. There she asked the prices
the list of books that she needed, and learned that six doll

would not quite supply them. She anxiously inquired for second-hand books, but was told that the only way to secure them was from the last year's Freshmen. Just then Elnora felt that she positively could not approach any of those she supposed to be Sophomores and ask to buy their old books. The only balm the girl could see for the humiliation of yesterday was to appear that day with a set of new books.

"Do you wish these?" asked the clerk hurriedly, for the store was rapidly filling with school children wanting anything from a dictionary to a pen.

"Yes," gasped Elnora, "Oh, yes! But I cannot pay for them just now. Please let me take them, and I will pay for them on Friday, or return them as perfect as they are. Please trust me for them a few days."

"I'll ask the proprietor," he said. When he came back Elnora knew the answer before he spoke.

"I'm sorry," he said, "but Mr. Hann doesn't recognize your name. You are not a customer of ours, and he feels that he can't take the risk."

Elnora clumped out of the store, the thump of her heavy shoes beating as a hammer on her brain. She tried two other dealers with the same result, and then in sick despair came into the street. What could she do? She was too frightened to think. Should she stay from school that day and canvass the homes appearing to belong to the wealthy, and try to sell beds of wild ferns, as she had suggested to Wesley Sinton? What would she dare ask for bringing in and planting a clump of ferns? How could she carry them? Would people buy them? She slowly moved past the hotel and then glanced around to see if there were a clock anywhere, for she felt sure the young people passing her constantly were on their way to school.

There it stood in a bank window in big black letters staring straight at her:

> WANTED: CATERPILLARS. COCOONS. CHRYSALIDES. PUPAE CASES. BUTTERFLIES. MOTHS. INDIAN RELICS OF ALL KINDS. HIGHEST SCALE OF PRICES PAID IN CASH

Elnora caught the wicket at the cashier's desk with both han to brace herself against disappointment.

"Who is it wants to buy cocoons, butterflies, and moths?" s panted.

"The Bird Woman," answered the cashier. "Have you some sale?"

"I have some, I do not know if they are what she would wan

"Well, you had better see her," said the cashier. "Do you kn where she lives?"

"Yes," said Elnora. "Would you tell me the time?"

"Twenty-one after eight," was the answer.

She had nine minutes to reach the auditorium or be la Should she go to school, or to the Bird Woman? Several gi passed her walking swiftly and she remembered their faces. Th were hurrying to school. Elnora caught the infection. She wou see the Bird Woman at noon. Algebra came first, and that pr fessor was kind. Perhaps she could slip to the superintendent a ask him for a book for the next lesson, and at noon—"Oh, de Lord, make it come true," prayed Elnora, at noon possibly s could sell some of those wonderful shining-winged things s had been collecting all her life around the outskirts of the Lim berlost.

As she went down the long hall she noticed the professor mathematics standing in the door of his recitation room. Whe she passed him he smiled and spoke to her.

"I have been watching for you," he said, and Elnora stoppe bewildered.

"For me?" she questioned.

"Yes," said Professor Henley. "Step inside."

Elnora followed him into the room and closed the door be hind them.

"At teachers' meeting last evening, one of the professors men tioned that a pupil had betrayed in class that she had expecte her books to be furnished by the city. I thought possibly it wa you. Was it?"

"Yes," breathed Elnora.

"That being the case," said Professor Henley, "it just occurre

me as you had expected that, you might require a little time to cure them, and you are too fine a mathematician to fall behind or want of supplies. So I telephoned one of our Sophomores to ring her last year's books this morning. I am sorry to say they are omewhat abused, but the text is all here. You can have them for wo dollars, and pay when you are ready. Would you care to ake them?"

Elnora sat suddenly, because she could not stand another in-tant. She reached both hands for the books, and said never word. The professor was silent also. At last Elnora arose, hug-ing those books to her heart as a mother clasps a baby.

"One thing more," said the professor. "You may pay your tui-ion quarterly. You need not bother about the first installment this nonth. Any time in October will do."

It seemed as if Elnora's gasp of relief must have reached the oles of her brogans.

"Did anyone ever tell you how beautiful you are!" she cried.

As the professor was lank, tow-haired and so nearsighted hat he peered at his pupils through spectacles, no one ever had.

"No," said Professor Henley, "I've waited some time for that; or which reason I shall appreciate it all the more. Come now, r we shall be late for opening exercises."

So Elnora entered the auditorium a second time. Her face vas like the brightest dawn that ever broke over the Limberlost. No matter about the lumbering shoes and skimpy dress. No matter bout anything, she had the books. She could take them home. n her garret she could commit them to memory, if need be. She ould prove that clothes were not all. If the Bird Woman did ot want any of the many different kinds of specimens she had collected, she was quite sure now she could sell ferns, nuts, and great many things. Then, too, a girl made a place for her that norning, and several smiled and bowed. Elnora forgot every-hing save her books, and that she was where she could use them ntelligently—everything except one little thing away back in her ead. Her mother had *known* about the books and the tuition, nd had not told her when she agreed to her coming.

At noon Elnora took her little parcel of lunch and started to

the home of the Bird Woman. She must know about the spe
mens first and then she would walk to the suburbs somewhere a
eat a few bites. She dropped the heavy iron knocker on the dc
of a big red log cabin, and her heart thumped at the resoundi
stroke.

"Is the Bird Woman at home?" she asked of the maid.

"She is at lunch," was the answer.

"Please ask her if she will see a girl from the Limberlost abc
some moths?" inquired Elnora.

"I never need ask, if it's moths," laughed the girl. "Ord
are to bring anyone with specimens right in. Come this way."

Elnora followed down the hall and entered a long room wi
high paneled wainscoting, old English fireplace with an ov
mantel and closets of peculiar china filling the corners. At a ba
table of oak, yellow as gold, sat a woman Elnora often h
watched and followed covertly around the Limberlost. The Bi
Woman was holding out a hand of welcome.

"I heard!" she laughed. "A little pasteboard box, or just t
mere word 'specimen,' passes you at my door. If it is moths I ho
you have hundreds. I've been very busy all summer and unab
to collect, and I need so many. Sit down and lunch with m
while we talk it over. From the Limberlost, did you say?"

"I live near the swamp," replied Elnora. "Since it's so clear
I dare go around the edge in daytime, though we are all afraid
night."

"What have you collected?" asked the Bird Woman, as sh
helped Elnora to sandwiches unlike any she ever before ha
tasted, salad that seemed to be made of many familiar things, an
a cup of hot chocolate that would have delighted any hungr
schoolgirl.

"I am afraid I am bothering you for nothing, and imposing o
you," she said. "That 'collected' frightens me. I've only gathere
I always loved everything outdoors, so I made friends and play
mates of them. When I learned that the moths die so soon,
saved them especially, because there seemed no wickedness in it.

"I have thought the same thing," said the Bird Woman en
couragingly. Then because the girl could not eat until she learne

bout the moths, the Bird Woman asked Elnora if she knew what inds she had.

"Not all of them," answered Elnora. "Before Mr. Duncan noved away he often saw me near the edge of the swamp and e showed me the box he had fixed for Freckles, and gave me the ey. There were some books and things, so from that time on I tudied and tried to take moths right, but I am afraid they are ot what you want."

"Are they the big ones that fly mostly in June nights?" asked ne Bird Woman.

"Yes," said Elnora. "Big gray ones with reddish markings, ale blue-green, yellow with lavender, and red and yellow."

"What do you mean by 'red and yellow'?" asked the Bird Woman so quickly that the girl almost jumped.

"Not exactly red," explained Elnora, with tremulous voice. "A eddish, yellowish brown, with canary-colored spots and gray ines on their wings."

"How many of them?" It was the same quick question.

"I had over two hundred eggs," said Elnora, "but some of hem didn't hatch, and some of the caterpillars died, but there nust be at least a hundred perfect ones."

"Perfect! How perfect?" cried the Bird Woman.

"I mean whole wings, no down gone, and all their legs and ntennæ," faltered Elnora.

"Young woman, that's the rarest moth in America," said the Bird Woman solemnly. "If you have a hundred of them, they are worth a hundred dollars according to my list. I can use all that are not damaged."

"What if they are not pinned right," quavered Elnora.

"If they are perfect, that does not make the slightest difference. I know how to soften them so that I can put them into any shape I choose. Where are they? When may I see them?"

"They are in Freckles's old case in the Limberlost," said Elnora. "I couldn't carry many for fear of breaking them, but I could bring a few after school."

"You come here at four," said the Bird Woman, "and we will drive out with some specimen boxes, and a price list, and see what

you have to sell. Are they your very own? Are you free to p with them?"

"They are mine," said Elnora. "No one but God knows I h them. Mr. Duncan gave me the books and the box. He t Freckles about me, and Freckles told him to give me all he l He said for me to stick to the swamp and be brave, and my h would come, and it has! I know most of them are all right, a oh, I do need the money!"

"Could you tell me?" asked the Bird Woman softly.

"You see the swamp and all the fields around it are so ful explained Elnora. "Every day I felt smaller and smaller, an wanted to know more and more, and pretty soon I grew desp ate, just as Freckles did. But I am better off than he was, for I h his books, and I have a mother; even if she doesn't care for as other girls' mothers do for them, it's better than no one."

The Bird Woman's glance fell, for the girl was not conscious how much she was revealing. Her eyes were fixed on a bla pitcher filled with goldenrod in the center of the table and s was saying what she thought.

"As long as I could go to the Brushwood school I was happ but I couldn't go further just when things were the most intere ing, so I was determined I'd come to high school and moth wouldn't consent. You see there's plenty of land, but fath was drowned when I was a baby, and mother and I can't ma money as men do. The taxes are higher every year, and she sa it was too expensive. I wouldn't give her any rest, until at l she bought me this dress, and these shoes and I came. It w awful!"

"Do you live in that beautiful cabin at the northwest end the swamp?" asked the Bird Woman.

"Yes," said Elnora.

"I remember the place and a story about it, now. You entere the high school yesterday?"

"Yes."

"It was rather bad?"

"Rather bad!" echoed Elnora.

The Bird Woman laughed.

"You can't tell me anything about that," she said. "I once ntered a city school straight from the country. My dress was rown calico, and my shoes were heavy."

The tears began to roll down Elnora's cheeks.

"Did they——?" she faltered.

"They did!" said the Bird Woman. "All of it. I am sure they id not miss one least little thing."

Then she wiped away some tears that began coursing her neeks, and laughed at the same time.

"Where are they now?" asked Elnora suddenly.

"They are widely scattered, but none of them have attained eights out of range. Some of the rich are poor, and some of the oor are rich. Some of the brightest died insane, and some of the ullest worked out high positions; some of the very worst to bear ave gone out, and I frequently hear from others. Now I am ere, able to remember it, and mingle laughter with what used o be all tears; for every day I have my beautiful work, and almost very day God sends someone like you to help me. What is our name, my girl?"

"Elnora Comstock," answered Elnora. "Yesterday on the board changed to Cornstock, and for a minute I thought I'd die, ut I can laugh over that already."

The Bird Woman arose and kissed her. "Finish your lunch," ne said, "and I will bring my price lists, and make a memoran- um of what you think you have, so I will know how many boxes o prepare. And remember this: What you are lies with you. If ou are lazy, and accept your lot, you may live in it. If you are illing to work, you can write your name anywhere you choose, mong the only ones who live beyond the grave in this world, he people who write books that help, make exquisite music, arve statues, paint pictures, and work for others. Never mind he calico dress, and the coarse shoes. Work at your books, and efore long you will hear yesterday's tormentors boasting that hey were once classmates of yours. 'I could a tale unfold'——!"

She laughingly left the room and Elnora sat thinking, until he remembered how hungry she was, so she ate the food, drank he hot chocolate and began to feel better.

Then the Bird Woman came back and showed Elnora a lo printed slip giving a list of graduated prices for moths, butt flies, and dragonflies.

"Oh, do you want them!" exulted Elnora. "I have a f and I can get more by the thousand, with every color in world on their wings."

"Yes," said the Bird Woman, "I will buy them, also the moth caterpillars that are creeping everywhere now, and cocoons that they will spin just about this time. I have a sneaki impression that the mystery, wonder, and the urge of their pu beauty, are going to force me to picture and paint our moths a put them into a book for all the world to see and know. Limberlost people must not be selfish with the wonders God h given to us. We must share with those poor cooped-up city peo the best we can. To send them a beautiful book, that is the wa is it not, little new friend of mine?"

"Yes, oh yes!" cried Elnora. "And please God they find way to earn the money to buy the books, as I have those I need badly."

"I will pay good prices for all the moths you can find," sa the Bird Woman, "because you see I exchange them with forei collectors. I want a complete series of the moths of America trade with a German scientist, another with a man in India, a another in Brazil. Others I can exchange with home collecto for those of California and Canada, so you see I can use all y can raise, or find. The banker will buy stone axes, arrow poin and Indian pipes. There was a teacher from the city grade schoo here today for specimens. There is a fund to supply the wa buildings. I'll help you get in touch with that. They want leaves different trees, flowers, grasses, moths, insects, birds' nests a anything about birds."

Elnora's eyes were blazing. "Had I better go back to school open a bank account and begin being a millionaire? Uncle Wesl and I have a bushel of arrow points gathered, a stack of axe pipes, skin-dressing tools, tubes and mortars. I don't know how ever shall wait three hours."

"You must go, or you will be late," said the Bird Woman. "I
l be ready at four."

After school closed Elnora, seated beside the Bird Woman,
ove to Freckles's room in the Limberlost. One at a time the
autiful big moths were taken from the interior of the old black
e. Not a fourth of them could be moved that night and it was
nost dark when the last box was closed, the list figured, and
o Elnora's trembling fingers were paid fifty-nine dollars and
teen cents. Elnora clasped the money closely.

"Oh, you beautiful stuff!" she cried. "You are going to buy the
oks, pay the tuition, and take me to high school."

Then because she was a woman, she sat on a log and looked at
r shoes. Long after the Bird Woman drove away Elnora re-
ined. She had her problem, and it was a big one. If she told
r mother, would she take the money to pay the taxes? If she
l not tell her, how could she account for the books, and things
r which she would spend it. At last she counted out what she
eded for the next day, placed the remainder in the farthest
rner of the case, and locked the door. She then filled the front
her skirt from a heap of arrow points beneath the case and
rted home.

CHAPTER IV

Wherein the Sintons Are Disappointed and Mrs. Comstock Learns That She Can Laugh

With the first streak of red above the Limberlost, Marg Sinton was busy with the gingham and the intricate pa pattern she had purchased. Wesley cooked the breakfast worked until he thought Elnora would be gone, then he sta to bring her mother.

"Now you be mighty careful," cautioned Margaret. "I d know how she will take it."

"I don't either," said Wesley philosophically, "but she's go take it some way. That dress has to be finished by school t in the morning."

Wesley had not slept well that night. He had been so b framing diplomatic speeches to make to Mrs. Comstock t sleep had little chance with him. Every step nearer to her approached his position seemed less enviable. By the time reached the front gate and started down the walk between rows of asters and lady slippers he was perspiring, and ev plausible and convincing speech had fled his brain. Mrs. Co stock helped him. She met him at the door.

"Good morning," she said. "Did Margaret send you for so thing?"

"Yes," said Wesley. "She's got a job that's too big for her, a she wants you to help."

"Of course I will," said Mrs. Comstock. It was no one's af

w lonely the previous day had been, or how the endless hours the present would drag. "What is she doing in such a rush?" Now was his chance.

"She's making a dress for Elnora," answered Wesley. He saw rs. Comstock's form straighten, and her face harden, so he con-ued hastily. "You see, Elnora has been helping us at harvest ne, butchering, and with unexpected visitors for years. We've ade out that she's saved us a considerable sum, and as she ouldn't ever touch any pay for anything, we just went to town d got a few clothes we thought would fix her up a little for the gh school. We want to get a dress done today mighty bad, but argaret is slow about sewing, and she never can finish alone, so came after you."

"And it's such a simple little matter, so dead easy, and all so be-een old friends like, that you can't look above your boots while u explain it," sneered Mrs. Comstock. "Wesley Sinton, what ut the idea into your head that Elnora would take things bought ith money, when she wouldn't take the money?"

Then Sinton's eyes came up straightly.

"Finding her on the trail last night sobbing as hard as I ever w anyone at a funeral. She wasn't complaining at all, but she's me to me all her life with her little hurts, and she couldn't hide w she'd been laughed at, twitted, and run face to face against e fact that there were books and tuition, unexpected, and noth-g will ever make me believe you didn't know that, Kate Com-ock."

"If any doubts are troubling you on that subject, sure I knew ! She was so anxious to try the world, I thought I'd just let her ke a few knocks and see how she liked them."

"As if she'd ever taken anything but knocks all her life!" cried Vesley Sinton. "Kate Comstock, you are a heartless, selfish oman. You've never shown Elnora any real love in her life. If ver she finds out that thing you'll lose her, and it will serve you ght."

"She knows it now," said Mrs. Comstock icily, "and she'll be ome tonight just as usual."

"Well, you are a brave woman if you dared put a girl of

Elnora's make through what she suffered yesterday, and
suffer again today, and let her know you did it on purpos
admire your nerve. But I've watched this since Elnora was b
and I got enough. Things have come to a pass where they
better for her, or I interfere."

"As if you'd ever done anything but interfere all her life! Th
I haven't watched you? Think I, with my heart raw in my bre
and too numb to resent it openly, haven't seen you and M
Sinton trying to turn Elnora against me day after day? When
you ever tell her what her father meant to me? When did
ever try to make her see the wreck of my life, and what
suffered? No indeed! Always it's been poor little abused Eln
and cakes, kissing, extra clothes, and encouraging her to run
you with a pitiful mouth every time I tried to make a woman
her."

"Kate Comstock, that's unjust," cried Sinton. "Only last ni
I tried to show her the picture I saw the day she was born
begged her to come to you and tell you pleasant what she need
and ask you for what I happen to know you can well afford
give her."

"I can't!" cried Mrs. Comstock. "You know I can't!"

"Then get so you can!" said Wesley Sinton. "Any day you
the word you can sell six thousand worth of rare timber off
place easy. I'll see to clearing and working the fields cheap as d
for Elnora's sake. I'll buy you more cattle to fatten. All you've
to do is sign a lease, to pull thousands from the ground in oil
the rest of us are doing all around you!"

"Cut down Robert's trees!" shrieked Mrs. Comstock. "T
up his land! Cover everything with horrid, greasy oil! I'll
first."

"You mean you'll let Elnora go like a beggar, and hurt a
mortify her past bearing. I've got to the place where I tell y
plain what I am going to do. Maggie and I went to town
night, and we bought what things Elnora needs most urgent
make her look a little like the rest of the high school girls. N
here it is in plain English. You can help get these things rea
and let us give them to her as we want——"

'She won't touch them!" cried Mrs. Comstock.

'Then you can pay us, and she can take them as her right——"

'I won't!"

'Then I will tell Elnora just what you are worth, what you can ord, and how much of this she owns. I'll loan her the money buy books and decent clothes, and when she is of age she can her share and pay me."

Mrs. Comstock gripped a chair-back and opened her lips, but words came.

"And," Sinton continued, "if she is so much like you that she n't do that, I'll go to the county seat and lay complaint against as her guardian before the judge. I'll swear to what you are rth, and how you are raising her, and have you discharged, have the judge appoint some man who will see that she is com- table, educated, and decent looking!"

"You—you wouldn't!" gasped Kate Comstock.

"I won't need to, Kate!" said Sinton, his heart softening the tant the hard words were said. "You won't show it, but you do e Elnora! You can't help it! You must see how she needs ings; come help us fix them, and be friends. Maggie and I uldn't live without her, and you couldn't either. You've got to e such a fine girl as she is; let it show a little!"

"You can hardly expect me to love her," said Mrs. Comstock ldly. "But for her a man would stand back of me now, who ould beat the breath out of your sneaking body for the cowardly ing with which you threaten me. After all I've suffered you'd ag me to court and compel me to tear up Robert's property. I ever go they carry me. If they touch one tree, or put down one easy old oil well, it will be over all I can shoot, before they be- n. Now, see how quick you can clear out of here!"

"You won't come and help Maggie with the dress?"

For answer Mrs. Comstock looked around swiftly for some ob- ct on which to lay her hands. Knowing her temper, Wesley nton left with all the haste consistent with dignity. But he d not go home. He crossed a field, and in an hour brought nother neighbor who was skillful with her needle. With sink- g heart Margaret saw them coming.

"Kate is too busy to help today, she can't sew before t morrow," said Wesley cheerfully as they entered.

That quieted Margaret's apprehension a little, though she h some doubts. Wesley prepared the lunch, and by four o'clo the dress was finished as far as it possibly could be until it w fitted on Elnora. If that did not entail too much work, it cou be completed in two hours.

Then Margaret packed their purchases into the big mark basket. Wesley took the hat, umbrella, and raincoat, and th went to Mrs. Comstock's. As they reached the step, Margar spoke pleasantly to Mrs. Comstock, who sat reading just inside t door, but she did not answer and deliberately turned a leaf wit out looking up.

Wesley Sinton opened the door and went in followed Margaret.

"Kate," he said, "you needn't take out your mad over o little racket on Maggie. I ain't told her a word I said to you, you said to me. She's not so very strong, and she's sewed sin four o'clock this morning to get this dress ready for tomorro It's done and we came down to try it on Elnora."

"Is that the truth, Mag Sinton?" demanded Mrs. Comstoc

"You heard Wesley say so," proudly affirmed Mrs. Sinto

"I want to make you a proposition," said Wesley. "Wait t Elnora comes. Then we'll show her the things and see what sh says."

"How would it do to see what she says without bribing her sneered Mrs. Comstock.

"If she can stand what she did yesterday, and will today, sh can bear 'most anything," said Wesley. "Put away the cloth if you want to, till we tell her."

"Well, you don't take this waist I'm working on," said Ma garet, "for I have to baste in the sleeves and set the collar. P the rest out of sight if you like."

Mrs. Comstock picked up the basket and bundles, placed the inside her room and closed the door.

Margaret threaded her needle and began to sew. Mrs. Com stock returned to her book, while Wesley fidgeted and raged i

rdly. He could see that Margaret was nervous and almost in
rs, but the lines in Mrs. Comstock's impassive face were set
d cold. So they sat while the clock ticked off the time—one
ur, two, dusk, and no Elnora. Just when Margaret and Wesley
re discussing whether he had not better go to town to meet
nora, they heard her coming up the walk. Wesley dropped his
ed chair and squared himself. Margaret gripped her sewing,
d turned pleading eyes toward the door. Mrs. Comstock
sed her book and grimly smiled.

"Mother, please open the door," called Elnora.

Mrs. Comstock arose and swung back the screen. Elnora
pped in beside her, bent half double, the whole front of her
ess gathered into a sort of bag filled with a heavy load, and
e arm stacked high with books. In the dim light she did not
the Sintons.

"Please hand me the empty bucket in the kitchen, mother," she
id. "I just had to bring these arrow points home, but I'm
ared for fear I've spoiled my dress and will have to wash it.
n to clean them, and take them to the banker in the morning,
d oh, mother, I've sold enough stuff to pay for my books, my
ition, and maybe a dress and some lighter shoes besides. Oh,
other I'm so happy! Take the books and bring the bucket!"

Then she saw Margaret and Wesley. "Oh, glory!" she exulted.
was just wondering how I'd ever wait to tell you, and here you
e! It's too perfectly splendid to be true!"

"Tell us, Elnora," said Sinton.

"Well sir," said Elnora, doubling down on the floor and
reading out her skirt, "set the bucket here, mother. These points
e brittle, and should be put in one at a time. If they are chipped
can't sell them. Well sir! I've had a time! You know I just
ad to have books. I tried three stores, and they wouldn't trust
e, not even three days, I didn't know what in this world I could
o quickly enough. Just when I was almost frantic I saw a sign
a bank window asking for caterpillars, cocoons, butterflies,
row points, and everything. I went in, and it was this Bird
oman who wants the insects, and the banker wants the stones.
had to go to school then, but, if you'll believe it"—Elnora

beamed on all of them in turn as she talked and slipped t
arrow points from her dress to the pail—"if you'll believe it
but you won't, hardly, until you look at the books—there was t
mathematics teacher, waiting at his door, and he had a set
books for me that he had telephoned a Sophomore to bring."

"How did he happen to do that, Elnora?" interrupted Sinto

Elnora blushed.

"It was a fool mistake I made yesterday in thinking boo
were just handed out to one. There was a teachers' meeting la
night and the history teacher told about that. Professor Henl
thought of me. You know I told you what he said about n
algebra, mother. Ain't I glad I studied out some of it myself th
summer! So he telephoned and a girl brought the books. Becau
they are marked and abused some I get the whole outfit f
two dollars. I can erase most of the marks, paste down the cove
and fix them so they look better. But I must hurry to the joy pa
I didn't stop to eat, at noon, I just ran to the Bird Woman's, an
I had lunch with her. It was salad, hot chocolate, and love
things, and she wants to buy most every old scrap I ever gathere
She wants dragonflies, moths, butterflies, and he—the banker,
mean—wants everything Indian. This very night she came
the swamp with me and took away enough stuff to pay for th
books and tuition, and tomorrow she is going to buy son
more."

Elnora laid the last arrow point in the pail and arose, shakin
leaves and bits of baked earth from her dress. She reached in
her pocket, produced her money and waved it before the
wondering eyes.

"And that's the joy part!" she exulted. "Put it up in the clo
till morning, mother. That pays for the books and tuitio
and——" Elnora hesitated, for she saw the nervous grasp wi
which her mother's fingers closed on the bills. Then she continue
but more slowly and thinking before she spoke.

"What I get tomorrow pays for more books and tuition, an
maybe a few, just a few, things to wear. These shoes are
dreadfully heavy and hot, and they make such a noise on th
floor. There isn't another calico dress in the whole buildin

ot among hundreds of us. Why, what is that? Aunt Margaret, hat are you hiding in your lap?"

She snatched the waist and shook it out, and her face was eaming. "Have you taken to waists all fancy and buttoned in ie back? I bet you this is mine!"

"I bet you so too," said Margaret Sinton. "You undress ght away and try it on, and if it fits, it will be done for iorning. There are some low shoes, too!"

Elnora began to dance. "Oh, you dear people!" she cried. "I an pay for them tomorrow night! Isn't it too splendid! I was ist thinking on the way home that I certainly would be com-elled to have cooler shoes until later, and I was wondering hat I'd do when the fall rains begin."

"I meant to get you some heavy dress skirts and a coat then," aid Mrs. Comstock.

"I know you said so!" cried Elnora. "But you needn't now! can buy every single stitch I need myself. Next summer I can ather up a lot more stuff, and all winter on the way to school. am sure I can sell ferns, I know I can nuts, and the Bird Voman says the grade rooms want leaves, grasses, birds' nests, nd cocoons. Oh, isn't this world lovely! I'll be helping with the ax, next, mother!"

Elnora waved the waist and started for the bedroom. When he opened the door she gave a little cry.

"What have you people been doing?" she demanded. "I ever saw so many interesting bundles in all my life. I'm 'skeered' o death for fear I can't pay for them, and will have to give ip something."

"Wouldn't you take them, if you could not pay for them, Elnora?" asked her mother instantly.

"Why, not unless you did," answered Elnora. "People have io right to wear things they can't afford, have they?"

"But from such old friends as Maggie and Wesley!" Mrs. Com-stock's voice was oily with triumph.

"From them least of all," cried Elnora stoutly. "From a stranger sooner than from them, to whom I owe so much more than I ever can pay now."

"Well, you don't have to," said Mrs. Comstock. "Maggie j selected these things, because she is more in touch with the wor and has got such good taste. You can pay as long as your mon holds out, and if there's more necessary, maybe I can sell t butcher a calf, or if things are too costly for us, of course, th can take them back. Put on the waist now, and then you c look over the rest and see if they are suitable, and what y want."

Elnora stepped into the adjoining room and closed the doo Mrs. Comstock picked up the bucket and started for the w with it. At the bedroom she paused.

"Elnora, were you going to wash these arrow points?"

"Yes. The Bird Woman says they sell better if they are clea so it can be seen that there are no defects in them."

"Of course," said Mrs. Comstock. "Some of them seem qui baked. Shall I put them to soak? Do you want to take them i the morning?"

"Yes, I do," answered Elnora. "If you would just fill the pa with water."

Mrs. Comstock left the room. Wesley Sinton sat with his bac to the window in the west end of the cabin which overlooked th well. A suppressed sound behind him caused him to turn quickl Then he arose and leaned over Margaret.

"She's out there laughing like a blamed monkey!" he whispere indignantly.

"Well, she can't help it!" exclaimed Margaret.

"I'm going home!" said Wesley.

"Oh no, you are not!" retorted Margaret. "You are missin the point. The point is not how you look, or feel. It is to ge these things in Elnora's possession past dispute. You go now, an tomorrow Elnora will wear calico, and Kate Comstock will re turn these goods. Right here I stay until everything we bought i Elnora's."

"What are you going to do?" asked Wesley.

"I don't know yet, myself," said Margaret.

Then she arose and peered from the window. At the well curb stood Katherine Comstock. The strain of the day was findin

action. Her chin was in the air, she was heaving, shaking and rangling to suppress any sound. The word that slipped between Margaret Sinton's lips shocked Wesley until he dropped on his hair, and recalled her to her senses. She was fairly composed as e turned to Elnora, and began the fitting. When she had nched, pulled, and patted she called, "Come see if you think is fits, Kate."

Mrs. Comstock had gone around to the back door and nswered from the kitchen. "You know more about it than I do. o ahead! I'm getting supper. Don't forget to allow for what will shrink in washing!"

"I set the colors and washed the goods last night; it can be ade to fit right now," answered Margaret.

When she could find nothing more to alter she told Elnora heat some water. After she had done that the girl began pening packages.

The hat came first.

"Mother!" cried Elnora. "Mother, of course, you have seen is, but you haven't seen it on me. I must try it on."

"Don't you dare put that on your head until your hair is washed nd properly combed," said Margaret.

"Oh!" cried Elnora. "Is that water to wash my hair? I thought was to set the color in another dress."

"Well, you thought wrong," said Margaret simply. "Your hair going to be washed and brushed until it shines like copper. Vhile it dries you can eat your supper, and this dress will be nished. Then you can put on your new ribbon, and your hat. ou can try your shoes now, and if they don't fit, you and Wesley an drive to town and change them. That little round bundle n the top of the basket is your stockings."

Margaret sat down and began sewing swiftly, and a little later pened the machine, and ran several long seams.

Elnora returned in a few minutes holding up her skirts and tepping daintily in the new shoes.

"Don't soil them, honey, else you're sure they fit," cautioned Vesley.

"They seem just a trifle large, maybe," said Elnora dubiously,

and Wesley knelt to feel. He and Margaret thought them a fi and then Elnora appealed to her mother. Mrs. Comstock ap peared wiping her hands on her apron. She examined the shoe critically.

"They seem to fit," she said, "but they are away too fine t walk country roads."

"I think so, too," said Elnora instantly. "We had better tak these back and get a cheaper pair. "

"Oh, let them go for this time," said Mrs. Comstock. "The are so pretty, I hate to part with them. You can get cheaper one after this."

Wesley and Margaret scarcely breathed for a long time.

Then Wesley went to do the feeding. Elnora set the table. Whe the water was hot, Margaret pinned a big towel around Elnora' shoulders and washed and dried the lovely hair according to th instructions she had been given the previous night. As the hai began to dry it billowed out in a sparkling sheen that caught th light and gleamed and flashed.

"Now, the idea is to let it stand naturally, just as the cur will make it. Don't you do any of that nasty, untidy snarling Elnora," cautioned Margaret. "Wash it this way every two week while you are in school, shake it out, and dry it. Then part it i the middle and turn a front quarter on each side from your face You tie the back at your neck with a string—so, and the ribbo goes in a big, loose bow. I'll show you." One after anothe Margaret Sinton tied the ribbons, creasing each of them so they could not be returned, as she explained that she was trying t find the color most becoming. Then she produced the raincoa which carried Elnora into transports.

Mrs. Comstock objected. "That won't be warm enough fo cold weather, and you can't afford it and a coat, too."

"I'll tell you what I thought," said Elnora. "I was planning o the way home. These coats are fine because they keep you dry I thought I would get one, and a warm sweater to wear unde it cold days. Then I always would be dry, and warm. The sweate only costs three dollars, so I could get it and the raincoat both fo half the price of a heavy cloth coat."

"You are right about that," said Mrs. Comstock. "You can hange more with the weather, too. Keep the raincoat, Elnora."

"Wear it until you try the hat," said Margaret. "It will have o do until the dress is finished."

Elnora picked up the hat dubiously. "Mother, may I wear ıy hair as it is now?" she asked.

"Let me take a good look," said Katherine Comstock.

Heaven only knows what she saw. To Wesley and to Margaret ıe bright young face of Elnora, with its pink tints, its heavy dark rows, its bright blue-gray eyes, and its frame of curling reddish-rown hair was the sweetest sight on earth, and at that instant lnora was radiant.

"So long as it's your own hair, and combed back as plain as it ill go, I don't suppose it cuts much ice whether it's tied a little ghter or looser," conceded Mrs. Comstock. "If you stop right ıere, you may let it go at that."

Elnora set the hat on her head. It was only a wide tan straw ith three exquisite peacock quills at one side. Margaret Sinton ried out, Wesley slapped his knee and sighed deeply while Mrs. omstock stood speechless for a second.

"I wish you had asked the price before you put that on," she id impatiently. "We never can afford it."

"It's not so much as you think," said Margaret. "Don't you e what I did? I had them take off the quills, and I put on some f those Phœbe Simms gave me from her peacocks. The hat will nly cost you a dollar and a half."

She avoided Wesley's eyes, and looked straight at Mrs. Com-ock. Elnora removed the hat to examine it.

"Why, they are those reddish-tan quills of yours!" she cried. Mother, look how beautifully they are set on! I'd much rather ave them than those from the store."

"So would I," said Mrs. Comstock. "If Margaret wants to pare them, that will make you a beautiful hat; dirt cheap, too! ou must go past Mrs. Simms and show her. She would be leased to see them."

Elnora sank into a chair and contemplated her toe. "Landy, in't I a queen?" she murmured. "What else have I got?"

"Just a belt, some handkerchiefs, and a pair of top shoes f rainy days and colder weather," said Margaret.

"About those high shoes, that was my idea," said Wesley. "Soc as it rains, low shoes won't do, and by taking two pairs at once could get them some cheaper. The low ones are two and the hig ones two-fifty, together three seventy-five. Ain't that cheap?"

"That's a real bargain," said Mrs. Comstock, "if they are goo shoes, and they look it."

"This," said Wesley, producing the last package, "is you Christmas present from your Aunt Maggie. I got mine, too, b it's at the house. I'll bring it up in the morning."

He handed Margaret the umbrella, and she passed it over Elnora who opened it and sat laughing under its shelter. Then sh kissed both of them. She brought a pencil and a slip of paper set down the prices they gave her of everything they had brough except the umbrella, added the sum, and said laughingly: "W you please wait till tomorrow for the money? I will have it the sure."

"Elnora," said Wesley Sinton. "Wouldn't you——"

"Elnora, hustle here a minute!" called Mrs. Comstock fro the kitchen. "I need you!"

"One second, mother," answered Elnora, throwing off the co and hat, and closing the umbrella as she ran. There were sever errands to do in a hurry, and then supper. Elnora chattered i cessantly, Wesley and Margaret talked all they could, while Mr Comstock said a word now and then, which was all she ever di But Wesley Sinton was watching her, and time and again h saw a peculiar little twist around her mouth. He knew that f the first time in sixteen years she really was laughing over som thing. She had all she could do to preserve her usually sober fac Wesley knew what she was thinking.

After supper the dress was finished, the pattern for the ne one discussed, and then the Sintons went home. Elnora gathere her treasures. When she started upstairs she stopped. "May I ki you good night, mother?" she asked lightly.

"Never mind any slobbering," said Mrs. Comstock. "I shou

hink you'd lived with me long enough to know that I don't care or it."

"Well, I'd love to show you in some way how happy I am, and ow I thank you."

"I wonder what for?" said Mrs. Comstock. "Mag Sinton chose hat stuff and brought it here and you pay for it."

"Yes, but you seemed willing for me to have it, and you said ou would help me if I couldn't pay all."

"Maybe I did," said Mrs. Comstock. "Maybe I did. I meant o get you some heavy dress skirts about Thanksgiving, and I till can get them. Go to bed, and for any sake don't begin ooning before a mirror, and make a dunce of yourself."

Mrs. Comstock picked up several papers and blew out the itchen light. She stood in the middle of the sitting-room floor or a time and then went into her room and closed the door. Sitting on the edge of the bed she thought for a few minutes and hen suddenly buried her face in the pillow and again heaved vith laughter.

Down the road plodded Margaret and Wesley Sinton. Neither f them had words to utter their united thought.

"Done!" hissed Wesley at last. "Done brown! Did you ever eel like a bloomin', confounded donkey? How did the woman o it?"

"She didn't do it!" gulped Margaret through her tears. "She idn't do anything. She trusted to Elnora's great big soul to bring er out right, and really she was right, and so it had to bring her. he's a darling, Wesley! But she's got a time before her. Did you ee Kate Comstock grab that money? Before six months she'll be ut combing the Limberlost for bugs and arrow points to help ay the tax. I know her."

"Well, I don't!" exclaimed Sinton, "she's too many for me. But here is a laugh left in her yet! I didn't s'pose there was. Bet you dollar, if we could see her this minute, she'd be chuckling over he way we got left."

Both of them stopped in the road and looked back.

"There's Elnora's light in her room," said Margaret. "The poor hild will feel those clothes, and pore over her books till morning,

but she'll look decent to go to school, anyway. Nothing is too bi
a price to pay for that."

"Yes, if Kate lets her wear them. Ten to one, she makes he
finish the week with that old stuff!"

"No, she won't," said Margaret. "She'll hardly dare. Ka
made some concessions, all right; big ones for her—if she did g
her way in the main. She bent some, and if Elnora proves that sh
can walk out barehanded in the morning and come back wit
that much money in her pocket, an armful of books, and buy
turnout like that, she proves that she is of some considerationi
and Kate's smart enough. She'll think twice before she'll do tha
Elnora won't wear a calico dress to high school again. Yo
watch and see if she does. She may have the best clothes she'
get for a time, for the least money, but she won't know it unt
she tries to buy goods herself at the same rates. Wesley, wha
about those prices? Didn't they shrink considerable?"

"You began it," said Wesley. "Those prices were all right. W
didn't say what the goods cost us, we said what they would co
her. Surely, she's mistaken about being able to pay all that. Ca
she pick up stuff of that value around the Limberlost? Didn
the Bird Woman see her trouble, and just give her the money?

"I don't think so," said Margaret. "Seems to me I've hear
of her paying, or offering to pay those who would take the mone
for bugs and butterflies, and I've known people who sold tha
banker Indian stuff. Once I heard that his pipe collection be
that of the Government at the Philadelphia Centennial. Tho
things have come to have a value."

"Well, there's about a bushel of that kind of valuables piled u
in the woodshed, that belongs to Elnora. At least, I picked the
up because she said she wanted them. Ain't it queer that she'
take to stones, bugs, and butterflies, and save them. Now the
are going to bring her the very thing she wants the worst. Lor
but this is a funny world when you get to studying! Looks lik
things didn't all come by accident. Looks as if there was a pla
back of it, and somebody driving that knows the road, and ho
to handle the lines. Anyhow, Elnora's in the wagon, and whe
I get out in the night and the dark closes around me, and I s

stars, I don't feel so cheap. Maggie, how the nation did
te Comstock do that?"

'You will keep on harping, Wesley. I told you she didn't do it.
ora did it! She walked in and took things right out of our
nds. All Kate had to do was to enjoy having it go her way, and
was cute enough to put in a few questions that sort of guided
ora. But I don't know, Wesley. This thing makes me think, too.
ose we'd taken Elnora when she was a baby, and we'd heaped
her all the love we can't on our own, and we'd coddled, petted,
d shielded her, would she have made the woman that living
ne, learning to think for herself, and taking all the knocks Kate
mstock could give, have made of her?"

'You bet your life!" cried Wesley warmly. "Loving anybody
n't hurt them. We wouldn't have done anything but love her.
u can't hurt a child loving it. She'd have learned to work, to
dy, and grown into a woman with us, without suffering like
oor homeless dog."

'But you don't see the point, Wesley. She would have grown
o a fine woman with us; but as we would have raised her,
uld her heart ever have known the world as it does now?
here's the anguish, Wesley, that child can't comprehend? Seeing
at she's seen of her mother hasn't hardened her. She can
derstand any mother's sorrow. Living life from the rough side
s only broadened her. Where's the girl or boy burning with
me, or struggling to find a way, that will cross Elnora's path
d not get a lift from her? She's had the knocks, but there'll
ver be any of the thing you call 'false pride' in her. I guess we
ter keep out. Maybe Kate Comstock knows what she's doing.
re as you live, Elnora has grown bigger on knocks than she
uld on love."

"I don't s'pose there ever was a very fine point to anything
t I missed it," said Wesley, "because I am blunt, rough, and
ve no book learning to speak of. Since you put it into words I
what you mean, but it's dinged hard on Elnora, just the same.
d I don't keep out. I keep watching closer than ever. I got
slap in the face, but if I don't miss my guess, Kate Comstock
rned her lesson, same as I did. She learned that I was in

earnest, that I would haul her to court if she didn't loosen u bit, and she'll loosen. You see if she doesn't. It may come ha and the hinges creak, but she'll fix Elnora decent after this Elnora doesn't prove that she can fix herself. As for me, I fou out that what I was doing was as much for myself as for Elno I wanted her to take those things from us, and love us for giv them. It didn't work, and but for you, I'd messed the whole th and stuck like a pig in crossing a bridge. But you helped me o Elnora's got the clothes, and by morning, maybe I won't gru Kate the only laugh she's had in sixteen years. You been sho ing me the way quite a spell now, ain't you, Maggie?"

In her attic Elnora lighted two candles, set them on her li table, stacked the books, and put away the precious clothes. H lovingly she hung the hat and umbrella, folded the raincoat, a spread the new dress over a chair. She fingered the ribbons, a tried to smooth the creases from them. She put away the h neatly folded, touched the handkerchiefs, and tried the belt. Th she slipped into her white nightdress, shook down her hair tha might become thoroughly dry, set a chair before the table, a reverently opened one of the books. A stiff draft swept attic, for it stretched the length of the cabin, and had a window each end. Elnora arose and going to the east window closed She stood for a minute looking at the stars, the sky, and dark outline of the straggling trees of the rapidly dismantli Limberlost. In the region of her case a tiny point of light flash and disappeared. Elnora straightened and wondered. Was it w to leave her precious money there? The light flashed once mo wavered a few seconds, and died out. The girl waited. She not see it again, so she turned to her books.

In the Limberlost the hulking figure of a man sneaked do the trail.

"The Bird Woman was at Freckles's room this evening," muttered. "Wonder what for?"

He left the trail, entered the enclosure still distinctly outlin and approached the case. The first point of light flashed fr the tiny electric lamp on his vest. He took a duplicate key fr his pocket, felt for the padlock and opened it. The door swu

e. The light flashed the second time. Swiftly his glance swept interior.

'Bout a fourth of her moths gone. Elnora must have been n the Bird Woman and given them to her." Then he stood e. His keen eyes discovered the roll of bills hastily thrust back he bottom of the case. He snatched them up, shut off the t, relocked the case by touch, and swiftly went down the trail. ry few seconds he paused and listened intently. Just as he hed the road, a second figure approached him.

Is it you, Pete?" came the whispered question.

Yes," said the first man.

I was coming down to take a peep, when I saw your flash," he . "I heard the Bird Woman had been at the case today. thing doing?"

Not a thing," said Pete. "She just took away about a fourth ne moths. Probably had the Comstock girl getting them for her. ard they were together. Likely she'll get the rest tomorrow. 't pickin' gettin' bare these days?"

Well, I should say so," said the second man, turning back in ust. "Coming home, now?"

No, I am going down this way," answered Pete, for his eyes ght the gleam from the window of the Comstock cabin, and had a desire to learn why Elnora's attic was lighted at that r.

He slouched down the road, occasionally feeling the size of roll he had not taken time to count.

The attic was too long, the light too near the other end, and cabin stood much too far back from the road. He could nothing although he climbed the fence and walked back op- ite the window. He knew Mrs. Comstock was probably awake, that she sometimes went to the swamp behind her home at nt. At times a cry went up from that locality that paralyzed one near, or sent them fleeing as if for life. He did not care cross behind the cabin. He returned to the road, passed, and in climbed the fence. Opposite the west window he could see ora. She sat before a small table reading from a book between candles. Her hair fell in a bright sheen around her, and with

one hand she lightly shook, and tossed it as she studied. T
man stood out in the night and watched.

For a long time a leaf turned at intervals and the hair-dry
went on. The man drew nearer. The picture grew more beaut
as he approached. He could not see so well as he desired,
the screen was of white mosquito netting, and it angered him.
cautiously crept closer. The elevation shut off his view. Then
remembered the large willow tree shading the well and bran
ing across the window at the west end of the cabin. From ch
hood Elnora had stepped from the sill to a limb and slid down
slanting trunk of the tree. He reached it and noiselessly swu
himself up. Three steps out on the big limb the man shudder
He was within a few feet of the girl.

He could see the throb of her breast under its thin cover
and smell the fragrance of the tossing hair. He could see
narrow bed with its pieced calico cover, the whitewashed w
with gay lithographs, and every crevice stuck full of twigs w
dangling cocoons. There were pegs for the few clothes, the
chest, the little table, the two chairs, the uneven floor cove
with rag rugs and braided corn husk. But nothing was wort
glance except the perfect face and form within reach by
spring through the rotten mosquito bar. He gripped the li
above that on which he stood, licked his lips, and breat
through his throat to be sure he was making no sound. Eln
closed the book and laid it aside. She picked up a towel,
turning the gathered ends of her hair rubbed them across
and dropping the towel on her lap, tossed the hair again. T
she sat in deep thought. By and by words began to come so
Near as he was the man could not hear at first. He bent closer
listened intently.

"—ever could be so happy," murmured the soft voice. "
dress is so pretty, such shoes, the coat, and everything. I w
have to be ashamed again, not ever again, for the Limberlos
full of precious moths, and I always can collect them. The
Woman will buy more tomorrow, and the next day, and the n
When they are all gone, I can spend every minute gathe
cocoons, and hunting other things I can sell. Oh, thank God,

precious, precious money. Why, I didn't pray in vain after all! ought when I asked the Lord to hide me, there in that big , that He wasn't doing it, because I wasn't covered from t that instant. But I'm hidden now, I feel that." Elnora d her eyes to the beams above her. "I don't know much about ying properly," she muttered, "but I do thank you, Lord, for ng me in your own time and way."

Her face was so bright that it shone with a white radiance. o big tears welled from her eyes, and rolled down her smiling eks. "Oh, I do feel that you have hidden me," she breathed. en she blew out the lights, and the little wooden bed creaked ler her weight.

Pete Corson dropped from the limb and found his way to the d. He stood still a long time, then started back to the Limber- . A tiny point of light flashed in the region of the case. He pped with an oath.

'Another hound trying to steal from a girl," he exclaimed. "But likely he thinks if he gets anything it will be from a woman o can afford it, as I did."

He went on, but beside the fences, and very cautiously.

'Swamp seems to be alive tonight," he muttered. "That's ee of us out."

He entered a deep place at the northwest corner, sat on the ound and taking a pencil from his pocket, he tore a leaf from ittle notebook, and laboriously wrote a few lines by the light carried. Then he went back to the region of the case and ited. Before his eyes swept the vision of the slender white eature with tossing hair. He smiled, and worshiped it, until distant rooster faintly announced dawn.

Then he unlocked the case again, and replaced the money, laid e note upon it, and went back to concealment, where he re- ained until Elnora came down the trail in the morning, ap- aring very lovely in her new dress and hat.

CHAPTER V

Wherein Elnora Receives a Warning, and Billy Appears on the Scene

IT WOULD be difficult to describe how happy Elnora was th morning as she hurried through her work, bathed and put on t neat, dainty gingham dress, and the tan shoes. She had a strug with her hair. It crinkled, billowed, and shone, and she could n avoid seeing the becoming frame it made around her face. I in deference to her mother's feelings the girl set her teeth, a bound her hair closely to her head with a shoestring. "Not to changed at the case," she told herself.

That her mother was watching she was unaware. Just as s picked up the beautiful brown ribbon Mrs. Comstock spoke.

"You had better let me tie that. You can't reach behind yo self and do it right."

Elnora gave a little gasp. Her mother never before had p posed to do anything for the girl that by any possibility she co do herself. Her heart quaked at the thought of how her moth would arrange that bow, but Elnora dared not refuse. The of was too precious. It might never be made again.

"Oh, thank you!" said the girl, and sitting down she held t the ribbon.

Her mother stood back and looked at her critically.

"You haven't got that like Mag Sinton had it last nigh she announced. "You little idiot! You've tried to plaster it down suit me, and you missed it. I liked it away better as Mag fix t, after I saw it. You didn't look so peeled."

'Oh mother, mother!" laughed Elnora, with a half sob in her
ce.
'Hold still, will you?" cried Mrs. Comstock. "You'll be late,
l I haven't packed your dinner yet."
She untied the string and shook out the hair. It rose with
ctricity and clung to her fingers and hands. Mrs. Comstock
nped back as if bitten. She knew that touch. Her face grew
ite, and her eyes angry.
'Tie it yourself," she said shortly, "and then I'll put on the
bon. But roll it back loose like Mag did. It looked so pretty
t way."
Almost fainting Elnora stood before the glass, divided off the
nt parts of her hair, and rolled them as Mrs. Sinton had
ne; tied it at the nape of her neck, then sat while her mother
anged the ribbon.
'If I pull it down till it comes tight in these creases where she
l it, it will be just right, won't it?" queried Mrs. Comstock,
l the amazed Elnora stammered, "Yes."
When she looked in the glass the bow was perfectly tied, and
v the gold tone of the brown did match the lustre of the shining
r! "That's pretty," commented Mrs. Comstock's soul, but her
f lips had said all that could be forced from them for once.
t then Wesley Sinton came to the door.
'Good morning," he cried heartily. "Elnora, you look a pic-
e! My, but you're sweet! If any of the city boys get sassy you
your Uncle Wesley, and he'll horsewhip them. Here's your
ristmas present from me." He handed Elnora the leather lunch
x, with her name carved across the strap in artistic lettering.
'Oh, Uncle Wesley!" was all Elnora could say.
'Your Aunt Maggie filled it for me for a starter," he said.
ow, if you are ready, I'm going to drive past your way and
u can ride almost to Onabasha with me, and save the new shoes
t much."
Elnora was staring at the box. "Oh, I hope it isn't impolite to
en it before you," she said. "I just feel as if I must see inside."
'Don't you stand on formality with the neighbors," laughed
nton. "Look in your box if you want to!"

Elnora slipped the strap and turned back the lid.

This disclosed the knife, fork, napkin, and spoon, the m flask, and the interior packed with dainty sandwiches wrapp in tissue paper, and the little compartments for meat, salad, a the custard cup.

"Oh, mother!" cried Elnora. "Oh, mother, isn't it fine? Wh made you think of it, Uncle Wesley? How will I ever thank yo No one will have a finer lunch box than I. Oh, I do thank yo That's the nicest gift I ever had. How I love Christmas September!"

"It's a mighty handy thing," assented Mrs. Comstock, taki in every detail with sharp eyes. "I guess you are glad now y went and helped Mag and Wesley when you could, Elnora

"Deedy, yes," laughed Elnora, "and I'm going again first ti they have a big day if I stay from school to do it."

"You'll do no such thing!" said the delighted Sinton. "Co now, if you're going!"

"If I ride, can you spare me time to run into the swamp to r box a minute?" asked Elnora.

The light she had seen the previous night troubled her.

"Sure," said Wesley largely. So they drove away and left white-faced woman watching them from the door, her heart little sorer than usual.

"I'd give a pretty to hear what he'll say to her!" she co mented bitterly. "Always sticking in, always doing things I ca ever afford. Where on earth did he get that thing and what d it cost?"

Then she entered the cabin and began the day's work, b mingled with the brooding bitterness of her soul was the vision a sweet young face, glad with a gladness never before seen on and over and over she repeated: "I wonder what he'll say her!"

What he said was that she looked as fresh and sweet as a po and to be careful not to step in the mud or scratch her sho when she went to the case.

Elnora found her key and opened the door. Not where she h placed it, but conspicuously in front lay her little heap of bil

nd a crude scrawl of writing beside it. Elnora picked up the note
a astonishment.

ERE ELNORY,

the lord amighty is hiding you all right done you ever dout it
is money of yourn was took for some time las nite but it is
eturned with intres for god sake done ever come to the swamp
nite or late evnin or mornin or far in any time sompin worse
n you know could git you

A FREND.

Elnora began to tremble. She hastily glanced around. The amp earth before the case had been trodden by large, roughly nod feet. She caught up the money and the note, thrust them nto her guimpe, locked the case, and ran to the road.

She was so breathless and her face so white Sinton noticed it.

"What in the world's the matter, Elnora?" he asked.

"I am half afraid!" she panted.

"Tut, tut, child!" said Wesley Sinton. "Nothing in the world o be afraid of. What happened?"

"Uncle Wesley," said Elnora, "I had more money than I rought home last night, and I put it in my case. Someone has een there. The ground is all trampled, and they left this note."

"And took your money, I'll wager," said Sinton angrily.

"No," answered Elnora. "Read the note, and oh, Uncle Wesley, ell me what it means!"

Sinton's face was a study. "I don't know what it means," he aid. "Only one thing is clear. It means some beast who doesn't eally want to harm you has got his eye on you, and he is telling ou plain as he can, not to give him a chance. You got to keep long the roads, in the open, and not let the biggest moth that ver flew toll you out of hearing of us, or your mother. It means hat, plain and distinct."

"Just when I can sell them! Just when everything is so lovely n account of them! I can't! I can't stay away from the swamp. The Limberlost is going to buy the books, the clothes, pay the uition, and even start a college fund. I just can't!"

"You've got to," said Sinton. "This is plain enough. You go ar in the swamp at your own risk, even in daytime."

"Uncle Wesley," said the girl, "last night before I went to bed I was so happy I tried to pray, and I thanked God for hiding me 'under the shadow of His wing.' But how in the world could anyone know it?"

Wesley Sinton's heart leaped in his breast. His face was whiter than the girl's now.

"Were you praying out loud, honey?" he almost whispered.

"I might have said words," answered Elnora. "I know I do sometimes. I've never had anyone to talk with, and I've played with and talked to myself all my life. You've caught me at it often, but it always makes mother angry when she does. She says it's silly. I forget and do it, when I'm alone. But Uncle Wesley, if I said anything last night, you know it was the merest whisper because I'd have been so afraid of waking mother. Don't you see? I sat up late, and studied two lessons."

Sinton was steadying himself. "I'll stop and examine the case as I come back," he said. "Maybe I can find some clue. That other—that was just accidental. It's a common expression. All the preachers use it. If I tried to pray, that would be the very first thing I'd say."

The color returned to Elnora's face.

"Did you tell your mother about this money, Elnora?" he asked.

"No, I didn't," said Elnora. "It's dreadful not to, but I was afraid. You see, they are clearing the swamp so fast. Every year it grows more difficult to find things, and Indian stuff becomes scarcer. I want to graduate, and that's four years unless I can double on the course. That means twenty dollars tuition each year, and new books, and clothes. There won't ever be so much at one time again, that I know. I just got to hang to my money. I was afraid to tell her, for fear she would want it for taxes, and she really must sell a tree or some cattle for that, mustn't she Uncle Wesley?"

"On your life, she must!" said Wesley. "You put your little wad in the bank all safe, and never mention it to a living soul. It doesn't seem right, but your case is peculiar. Every word you say is a true word. Each year you will find less in the swamp, and things everywhere will be scarcer. If you ever get a few

dollars ahead, that can start your college fund. You know you are going to college, Elnora!"

"Of course I am," said Elnora. "I settled that as soon as I knew what a college was. I will put all my money in the bank, except what I owe you. I'll pay that now."

"If your arrows are heavy," said Wesley, "I'll drive on to Onabasha with you."

"But they are not. Half of them were nicked, and this little box held all the good ones. It's so surprising how many are spoiled when you wash them."

"What does he pay?"

"Ten cents for any common perfect one, fifty for revolvers, a dollar for obsidian, and whatever is right for enormous big ones."

"Well, that sounds fair," said Sinton. "You can come down Saturday and wash the stuff at our house, and I'll take it in when we go marketing in the afternoon."

Elnora jumped from the carriage. She soon found that with her books, her lunch box, and the points she had a heavy load. She had almost reached the bridge crossing the culvert when she heard distressed screams of a child. Across an orchard of the suburbs came a small boy, after him a big dog, urged by a man in the background. Elnora's heart was with the small fleeing figure in any event whatever. She dropped her load on the bridge, and with practiced hand flung a stone at the dog. The beast curled double with a howl. The boy reached the fence, and Elnora was there to help him over. As he touched the top she swung him to the ground, but he clung to her, clasping her tightly, sobbing with fear. Elnora helped him to the bridge, and sat with him in her arms. For a time his replies to her questions were indistinct, but at last he became quieter and she could understand.

He was a mite of a boy, nothing but skin-covered bones, his burned, freckled face in a mortar of tears and dust, his clothing unspeakably dirty, one great toe in a festering mass from a broken nail, and sores all over the visible portions of the small body.

"You won't let the mean old thing make his dog get me!" he wailed.

"Indeed no," said Elnora, holding him closely.

"You wouldn't set a dog on a boy for just taking a few old apples when you fed 'em to pigs with a shovel every day, would you?"

"No, I would not," said Elnora hotly.

"You'd give a boy all the apples he wanted, if he hadn't any breakfast, and was so hungry he was all twisty inside, wouldn't you?"

"Yes, I would," said Elnora.

"If you had anything to eat you would give me something right now, wouldn't you?"

"Yes," said Elnora. "There's nothing but just stones in the package. But my dinner is in that case. I'll gladly divide."

She opened the box. The famished child gave a little cry and reached both hands. Elnora caught them back.

"Did you have any supper?"

"No."

"Any dinner yesterday?"

"An apple and some grapes I stole."

"Whose boy are you?"

"Old Tom Billings's."

"Why doesn't your father get you something to eat?"

"He does most days, but he's drunk now."

"Hush, you must not!" said Elnora. "He's your father!"

"He's spent all the money to get drunk, too," said the boy, "and Jimmy and Belle are both crying for breakfast. I'd 'a' got out all right with an apple for myself, but I tried to get some for them and the dog got too close. Say, you can throw, can't you?"

"Yes," admitted Elnora. She poured half the milk into the cup. "Drink this," she said, holding it to him.

The boy gulped the milk and swore joyously, gripping the cup with shaking fingers.

"Hush!" cried Elnora. "That's dreadful!"

"What's dreadful?"

"To say such awful words."

"Huh! Pa says worser 'an that every breath he draws."

Elnora saw that the child was older than she had thought. He might have been forty judging by his hard, unchildish expression

"Do you want to be like your father?"

"No, I want to be like you. Couldn't a angel be prettier 'an you. Can I have more milk?"

Elnora emptied the flask. The boy drained the cup. He drew a breath of satisfaction as he gazed into her face.

"You wouldn't go off and leave your little boy, would you?" he asked.

"Did someone go away and leave you?"

"Yes, my mother went off and left me, and left Jimmy and Belle, too," said the boy. "You wouldn't leave your little boy, would you?"

"No."

The boy looked eagerly at the box. Elnora lifted a sandwich and uncovered the fried chicken. The boy gasped with delight.

"Say, I could eat the stuff in the glass and the other box and carry the bread and the chicken to Jimmy and Belle," he offered.

Elnora silently uncovered the custard with preserved cherries on top and handed it and the spoon to the child. Never did food disappear faster. The salad went next, and a sandwich and half a chicken breast followed.

"I better leave the rest for Jimmy and Belle," he said, "they're 'ist fightin' hungry."

Elnora gave him the remainder of the carefully prepared lunch. The boy clutched it and ran with a sidewise hop like a wild thing. She covered the dishes and cup, polished the spoon, replaced it, and closed the case. She caught her breath in a tremulous laugh.

"If Aunt Margaret knew that, she'd never forgive me," she said. "It seems as if secrecy is literally forced upon me, and I hate it. What shall I do for lunch? I'll have to sell my arrows and keep enough money for a restaurant sandwich."

So she walked hurriedly into town, sold her points at a good price, deposited her funds, and went away with a neat little bank book and the note from the Limberlost carefully folded inside. Elnora passed down the hall that morning, and no one paid the slightest attention to her. The truth was she looked so like everyone else that she was perfectly inconspicuous. But in the coat room

there were members of her class. Surely no one intended it, but the whisper was too loud.

"Look at the girl from the Limberlost in the clothes that woman gave her!"

Elnora turned on them. "I beg your pardon," she said unsteadily, "I couldn't help hearing that! No one gave me these clothes. I paid for them myself."

Someone muttered, "Pardon me," but incredulous faces greeted her.

Elnora felt driven. "Aunt Margaret selected them, and she meant to give them to me," she explained, "but I wouldn't take them. I paid for them myself." There was silence.

"Don't you believe me?" panted Elnora.

"Really, it is none of our affair," said another girl. "Come on, let's go."

Elnora stepped before the girl who had spoken. "You have made this your affair," she said, "because you told a thing which was not true. No one gave me what I am wearing. I paid for my clothes myself with money I earned selling moths to the Bird Woman. I just came from the bank where I deposited what I did not use. Here is my credit." Elnora drew out and offered the little red book. "Surely you will believe that," she said.

"Why, of course," said the girl who first had spoken. "We met such a lovely woman in Brownlee's store, and she said she wanted our help to buy some things for a girl, and that's how we came to know."

"Dear Aunt Margaret," said Elnora, "it was like her to ask you. Isn't she splendid?"

"She is indeed," chorused the girls. Elnora set down her lunch box and books, unpinned her hat, hanging it beside the others, and taking up the books she reached to set the box in its place and dropped it. With a little cry she snatched at it and caught the strap on top. That pulled from the fastening, the cover unrolled, the box fell away as far as it could, two porcelain lids rattled on the floor, and the one sandwich rolled like a cartwheel across the room. Elnora lifted a ghastly face. For once no one laughed. She stood an instant staring.

"It seems to be my luck to be crucified at every point of the ompass," she said at last. "First two days you thought I was a auper, now you will think I'm a fraud. All of you will believe bought an expensive box, and then was too poor to put anying but a restaurant sandwich in it. You must stop till I prove to ou that I'm not."

Elnora gathered up the lids, and kicked the sandwich into corner.

"I had milk in that bottle, see! And custard in the cup. There as salad in the little box, fried chicken in the large one, and nut ndwiches in the tray. You can see the crumbs of all of them. man set a dog on a child who was so starved he was stealing ples. I talked with him, and I thought I could bear hunger tter, he was such a little boy, so I gave him my lunch, and got e sandwich at the restaurant."

Elnora held out the box. The girls were laughing by that time. You goose," said one, "why didn't you give him the money, id save your lunch?"

"He was such a little fellow, and he really was hungry," said nora. "I often go without anything to eat at noon in the fields id woods, and never think of it."

She closed the box and set it beside the lunches of other country upils. While her back was turned, into the room came the girl her encounter on the first day, walked to the rack, and with an clamation of approval took down Elnora's hat.

"Just the thing I have been wanting!" she said. "I never saw ch beautiful quills in all my life. They match my new broadoth to perfection. I've got to have that kind of quills for my hat. never saw the like! Whose is it, and where did it come om?"

No one said a word, for Elnora's question, the reply, and her nswer, had been repeated. Everyone knew that the Limberlost rl had come out ahead and Sadie Reed had not been amiable, hen the little flourish had been added to Elnora's name in the gebra class. Elnora's swift glance was pathetic, but no one lped her. Sadie Reed glanced from the hat to the faces around r and wondered.

"Why, this is the Freshman section, whose hat is it?" she aske again, this time impatiently.

"That's the tassel of the cornstock," said Elnora with a force laugh.

The response was genuine. Everyone shouted. Sadie Ree blushed, but she laughed also.

"Well, it's beautiful," she said, "especially the quills. They ar exactly what I want. I know I don't deserve any kindness fro you, but I do wish you would tell me at whose store you foun those quills."

"Gladly!" said Elnora. "You can't buy quills like those at store. They are from a living bird. Phœbe Simms gathers ther in her orchard as her peacocks shed them. They are wing quil from the males."

Then there was perfect silence. How was Elnora to know tha not a girl there would have told that?

"I haven't a doubt but I can get you some," she offered. "Sh gave Aunt Margaret a large bunch, and those are part of them I am quite sure she has more, and would spare some."

Sadie Reed laughed shortly. "You needn't trouble," she sai "I was fooled. I thought they were expensive quills. I wante them for a twenty-dollar velvet toque to match my new suit. they are gathered from the ground, really, I couldn't use them.

"Only in spots!" said Elnora. "They don't just cover the earth Phœbe Simms's peacocks are the only ones within miles Onabasha, and they moult but once a year. If your hat co only twenty dollars, it's scarcely good enough for those quills. Yo see, the Almighty made and colored those Himself; and H puts the same kind on Phœbe Simms's peacocks that He put o the head of the family in the forests of Ceylon, away back i the beginning. Any old manufactured quill from New York Chicago will do for your little twenty-dollar hat. You shoul have something infinitely better than that to be worthy of quil that are made by the Creator."

How those girls did laugh! One of them walked with Elno to the auditorium, sat beside her during exercises, and tried t talk whenever she dared, to keep Elnora from seeing the curiou

ıd admiring looks bent upon her. For the brown-eyed boy histled, and there was pantomime of all sorts going on behind nora's back that day. Happy with her books, no one knew how uch she saw, and from her absorption in her studies it was ident she cared too little to notice.

After school she went again to the home of the Bird Woman, ıd together they visited the swamp and carried away more ecimens. This time Elnora asked the Bird Woman to keep the oney until noon of the next day, when she would call for it and ıve it added to her bank account. She slowly walked home, for e visit to the swamp had brought back full force the experience the morning. Again and again she examined the crude little ote, for she did not know what it meant, yet it bred vague ar. The only thing of which Elnora knew herself afraid was r mother; when with wild eyes and ears deaf to childish plead-g, she sometimes lost control of herself in the night and sited the pool where her husband had sunk before her, calling s name in unearthly tones and begging of the swamp to give ıck its dead.

CHAPTER VI

Wherein Mrs. Comstock Indulges in "Frills," and Billy Reappears

It was Wesley Sinton who really wrestled with Elnora's pro lem while he drove about his business. He was not forced to a himself what it meant; he knew. The old Corson gang was st holding together. Elder members who had escaped the law ha been joined by a younger brother of Jack's, and they met in th thickest of the few remaining fast places of the swamp to drin gamble, and loaf. Then suddenly, there would be a robbery some country house where a farmer that day had sold his whe or corn and not paid a visit to the bank; or in some neighborin village.

The home of Mrs. Comstock and Elnora adjoined the swam Sinton's land lay next, and not another residence or man easy reach in case of trouble. Whoever wrote that note had some h man kindness in his breast, but the fact stood revealed that feared his strength if Elnora were delivered into his hands. Whe had he been the previous night when he heard that prayer? W that the first time he had been in such proximity? Sinton dro fast, for he wished to reach the swamp before Elnora and the Bi Woman would go there.

At almost four he came to the case, and dropping on his kne studied the ground, every sense alert. He found two or three litt heel prints. Those were made by Elnora or the Bird Woma What Sinton wanted to learn was whether all the remaind were the footprints of one man. It was easily seen, they we

. There were deep, even tracks made by fairly new shoes, and
ers where a well-worn heel cut deeper on the inside of the
ıt than at the outer edge. Undoubtedly some of Corson's old
g were watching the case, and the visits of the women to it.
ere was no danger that anyone would attack the Bird Woman.
never went to the swamp at night, and on her trips in the
time, everyone knew that she carried a revolver, understood
v to use it, and pursued her work in a fearless manner.
Elnora, prowling around the swamp and lured into the in-
or by the flight of moths and butterflies; Elnora, without
ıer, money, or friends save himself, to defend her—Elnora was
ifferent proposition. For this to happen just when the Limber-
was bringing the very desire of her heart to the girl, it was too
l.
Sinton was afraid for her, yet he did not want to add the bur-
of fear to Katharine Comstock's trouble, or to disturb the joy
Elnora in her work. He stopped at the cabin and slowly went
the walk. Mrs. Comstock was sitting on the front steps with
ıe sewing. The work seemed to Sinton as if she might be en-
ged in putting a tuck in a petticoat. He thought of how Mar-
et had shortened Elnora's dress to the accepted length for girls
ıer age, and made a mental note of Mrs. Comstock's occupa-
ı.
She dropped her work on her lap, laid her hands on it and
ked into his face with a sneer.
'You didn't let any grass grow under your feet," she said.
Sinton saw her white, drawn face and comprehended.
'I went to pay a debt and see about this opening of the ditch,
te."
'You said you were going to prosecute me."
'Good gracious, Kate!" cried Sinton. "Is that what you have
n thinking all day? I told you before I left yesterday that I
uld not need do that. And I won't! We can't afford to quarrel
r Elnora. She's all we've got. Now that she has proved that
ou don't do just what I think you ought by way of clothes
d schooling, she can take care of herself, I put that out of my
ıd. What I came to see you about is a kind of scare I've had

today. I want to ask you if you ever see anything about
swamp that makes you think the old Corson gang is still
work?"

"Can't say that I do," said Mrs. Comstock. "There's kind
dancing lights there sometimes, but I supposed it was just peo
passing along the road with lanterns. Folks hereabout are n
too fond of the swamp. I hate it like death. I've never sta
here a night in my life without Robert's revolver, clean a
loaded, under my pillow, and the shotgun, same condition,
the bed. I can't say that I'm afraid here at home. I'm not. I
take care of myself. But none of the swamp for me!"

"Well, I'm glad you are not afraid, Kate, because I must
you something. Elnora stopped at the case this morning, a
somebody had been into it in the night."

"Broke the lock?"

"No. Used a duplicate key. Today I heard there was a n
here last night. I want to nose around a little."

Sinton went to the east end of the cabin and looked up at
window. There was no way anyone could have reached it w
out a ladder, for the logs were hewed and mortar filled the cra
even. Then he went to the west end, the willow faced him as
turned the corner. He examined the trunk carefully. There was
mistake about small particles of black swamp muck adhering
the sides of the tree. He reached the low branches and climb
the willow. There was earth on the large limb crossing Elno
window. He stood on it, holding the branch as had been d
the night before, and looked into the room. He could see v
little, but he knew that if it had been dark outside and sufficie
light for Elnora to study inside he could have seen vividly.
brought his face close to the netting, and he could see the
with its head to the east, at its foot the table with the candles
the chair before it, and then he knew where the man had b
who had heard Elnora's prayer.

Mrs. Comstock had followed around the corner and st
watching him. "Do you think some slinking hulk was up th
peekin' in at Elnora?" she demanded indignantly.

"There is muck on the trunk, and plenty on the limb," s

nton. "Hadn't you better get a saw and let me take this branch ?"

"No, I hadn't," said Mrs. Comstock. "First place, Elnora's mbed from that window on that limb all her life, and it's hers. cond place, no one gets ahead of me after I've had warning. y crow that perches on that roost again will get its feathers mewhat scattered. Look along the fence, there, and see if you n find where he came in."

The place was easy to find as was a trail leading for some dis- nce west of the cabin.

"You just go home, and don't fret yourself," said Mrs. Com- ck. "I'll take care of this. If you should hear the dinner bell at y time in the night you come down. But I wouldn't say any- ng to Elnora. She better keep her mind on her studies, if she's ing to school."

When the work was finished that night Elnora took her books d went to her room to prepare some lessons, but every few min- es she looked toward the swamp to see if there were lights near e case. Mrs. Comstock raked together the coals in the cooking ve, got out the lunch box, and sitting down she studied it imly. At last she arose.

"Wonder how it would do to show Mag Sinton a frill or two," e murmured.

She went to her room, knelt before a big black-walnut chest d hunted through its contents until she found an old-fashioned ok book. She tended the fire as she read and presently was in tion. She first sawed an end from a fragrant, juicy, sugar-cured m and put it to cook. Then she set a couple of eggs boiling, and ter long hesitation began creaming butter and sugar in a crock. n hour later the odor of the ham, mingled with some of the chest spices of "happy Araby," in a combination that could ean nothing save spice cake, crept up to Elnora so strongly that e lifted her head and sniffed amazedly. She would have given l her precious money to have gone down and thrown her arms ound her mother's neck, but she did not dare move.

Mrs. Comstock was up early, and without a word handed lnora the case as she left the next morning.

"Thank you, mother," said Elnora, and went on her way.

She walked down the road looking straight ahead until s came to the corner, where she usually entered the swamp. S paused, glanced that way and smiled. Then she turned and look back. There was no one coming in any direction. She follow the road until well around the corner, then she stopped and on a grassy spot, laid her books beside her and opened the lun box. Last night's odors had in a measure prepared her for wh she would see, but not quite. She scarcely could believe her sens Half the bread compartment was filled with dainty sandwich of bread and butter sprinkled with the yolk of egg and the mainder with three large slices of the most fragrant spice ca imaginable. The meat dish contained shaved cold ham, of whi she knew the quality, the salad was tomatoes and celery, and t cup held preserved pear, clear as amber. There was milk in t bottle, two tissue-wrapped cucumber pickles in the folding drin ing-cup, and a fresh napkin in the ring. No lunch was ev daintier or more palatable; of that Elnora was perfectly sure. A her mother had prepared it for her! "She does love me!" cri the happy girl. "Sure as you're born she loves me; only she has found it out yet!"

She touched the papers daintily, and smiled at the box as if were a living thing. As she began closing it a breath of air swe by, lifting the covering of the cake. It was like an invitation, a breakfast was several hours away. Elnora picked up a piece a ate it. That cake tasted even better than it looked. Then she tri a sandwich. How did her mother come to think of making the that way. They never had any at home. She slipped out the fo sampled the salad, and one-quarter of pear. Then she closed t box and started down the road nibbling one of the pickles a trying to decide exactly how happy she was, but she could fi no standard high enough for a measure.

She was to go to the Bird Woman's after school for the l load from the case. Saturday she would take the arrow points a specimens to the bank. That would exhaust her present suppl and give her enough money ahead to pay for books, tuition, a clothes for at least two years. She would work early and l

athering nuts. In October she would sell all the ferns she could nd. She must collect specimens of all tree leaves before they fell, ather nests and cocoons later, and keep her eyes wide open for nything the grades could use. She would see the superintend- it that night about selling specimens to the ward buildings. he must be ahead of anyone else if she wanted to furnish these ings. So she approached the bridge.

That it was occupied could be seen from a distance. As she me up she found the small boy of yesterday awaiting her with confident smile.

"We brought you something!" he announced without greet- g. "This is Jimmy and Belle—and we brought you a present." He offered a parcel wrapped in brown paper.

"Why, how lovely of you!" said Elnora. "I supposed you had rgotten me when you ran away so fast yesterday."

"Naw, I didn't forget you," said the boy. "I wouldn't forget ou, not ever! Why, I was ist a-hurrying to take them things to mmy and Belle. My, they was glad!"

Elnora glanced at the children. They sat on the edge of the idge, obviously clad in a garment each, very dirty and un- pt, a little boy and a girl of about seven and nine. Elnora's art began to ache.

"Say," said the boy. "Ain't you going to look what we have ve you?"

"I thought it wasn't polite to look before people," answered lnora. "Of course, I will, if you would like to have me."

Elnora opened the package. She had been presented with a uarter of a stale loaf of baker's bread, and a big piece of ancient logna.

"But don't you want this yourselves?" she asked in surprise.

"Gosh, no! I mean ist no," said the boy. "We always have it. e got stacks this morning. Pa's come out of it now, and he's so rry he got more 'an ever we can eat. Have you had any before?"

"No," said Elnora, "I never did!"

The boy's eyes brightened and the girl moved restlessly.

"We thought maybe you hadn't," said the boy. "First you er have, you like it real well; but when you don't have any-

thing else for a long time, years an' years, you git so tired." H hitched at the string which held his trousers and watched Elnor speculatively.

"I don't s'pose you'd trade what you got in that box for ist ol bread and bologna now, would you? Mebby you'd like it! And know, I ist know, what you got would taste like heaven to Jimm and Belle. They never had nothing like that! Not even Belle, an she's most ten! No, sir-ee, they never tasted things like you got!

It was in Elnora's heart to be thankful for even a taste in tim as she knelt on the bridge, opened the box and divided her lunc into three equal parts, the smaller boy getting most of the mil Then she told them it was school time and she must go.

"Why don't you put your bread and bologna in the nice box? asked the boy.

"Of course," said Elnora. "I didn't think."

When the box was arranged to the children's satisfaction all c them accompanied Elnora to the corner where she turned towar the high school.

"Billy," said Elnora, "I would like you much better if yo were cleaner. Surely, you have water! Can't you children g some soap and wash yourselves? Gentlemen are never dirty. Yo want to be a gentleman, don't you?"

"Is being clean all you have to do to be a gentleman?"

"No," said Elnora. "You must not say bad words, and yo must be kind and polite to your sister."

"Must Belle be kind and polite to me, else she ain't a lady?"

"Yes."

"Then Belle's no lady!" said Billy succinctly.

Elnora could say nothing more just then, and she bade the good-bye and started them home.

"The poor little souls!" she mused. "I think the Almighty pu them in my way to show me real trouble. I won't be likely t spend much time pitying myself while I can see them." Sh glanced at the lunch box. "What on earth do I carry this for? never had anything that was so strictly ornamental! One su thing! I can't take this stuff to the high school. You never see

know exactly what is going to happen to you while you are ere."

As if to provide a way out of her difficulty a big dog arose from lawn, and came toward the gate wagging his tail. "If those ildren ate the stuff, it can't possibly kill him!" thought Elnora, she offered the bologna. The dog accepted it graciously, and ing a beast of pedigree he trotted around to a side porch and id the bologna before his mistress. The woman snatched it, reaming: "Come, quick! Someone is trying to poison Pedro!" er daughter came running from the house. "Go see who is on e street. Hurry!" cried the excited mother.

Ellen Brownlee ran and looked. Elnora was half a block away, id no one nearer. Ellen called loudly, and Elnora stopped. Ellen me running toward her.

"Did you see anyone give our dog something?" she cried as e approached.

Elnora saw no escape.

"I gave it a piece of bologna myself," she said. "It was fit to t. It wouldn't hurt the dog."

Ellen stood and looked at her. "Of course, I didn't know it as your dog," explained Elnora. "I had something I wanted to row to some dog, and that one looked big enough to manage "

Ellen had arrived at her conclusions. "Pass over that lunch ox," she demanded.

"I will not!" said Elnora.

"Then I will have you arrested for trying to poison our dog," ughed the girl as she took the box.

"One chunk of stale bread, one half mile of antique bologna ntributed for dog feed; the remains of cake, salad and preserves an otherwise empty lunch box. One ham sandwich yesterday. think it's lovely you have the box. Who ate your lunch today?"

"Same," confessed Elnora, "but there were three of them this me."

"Wait, until I run back and tell mother about the dog, and t my books."

Elnora waited. That morning she walked down the hall an into the auditorium beside one of the very nicest girls in Ona basha, and it was the fourth day. But the surprise came at noo when Ellen insisted upon Elnora lunching at the Brownlee hom and convulsed her parents and family, and overwhelmed Elnor with a greatly magnified, but moderately accurate history of he lunch box.

"Gee! but it's a box, daddy!" cried the laughing girl. "It carved leather and fastens with a strap that has her name on i Inside are trays for things all complete, and it bears evidence o having enclosed delicious food, but Elnora never gets any. She carried it two days now, and both times it has been empty befor she reached school. Isn't that killing?"

"It is, Ellen, in more ways than one. No girl is going to ea breakfast at six o'clock, walk three miles, and do good work with out her lunch. You can't tell me anything about that box. I sol it last Monday night to Wesley Sinton, one of my good countr customers. He told me it was a present for a girl who was worth of it, and I see he was right."

"He's so good to me," said Elnora. "Sometimes I look at hin and wonder if a neighbor can be so kind to one, what a rea father would be like. I envy a girl with a father unspeakably."

"You have cause," said Ellen Brownlee. "A father is the ver dearest person in the whole round world, except a mother, wh is just a dear." The girl, starting to pay tribute to her father, saw that she must include her mother, and said the thing before sh remembered what Mrs. Sinton had told the girls in the store. She stopped in dismay. Elnora's face paled a trifle, but she smile bravely.

"Then I'm fortunate in having a mother," she said.

Mr. Brownlee lingered at the table after the girls had excused themselves and returned to school.

"There's a girl Ellen can't see too much of, in my opinion," he said. "She is every inch a lady, and not a foolish notion o action about her. I can't understand just what combination o circumstances produced her in this day."

"It has been an unusual case of repression, for one thing. She

aits on her elders and thinks before she speaks," said Mrs. rownlee.

"She's mighty pretty. She looks so sound and wholesome, and ıe's neatly dressed."

"Ellen says she was a fright the first two days. Long brown alico dress almost touching the floor, and big, lumbering shoes. hose Sinton people bought her clothes. Ellen was in the store, nd the woman stopped her crowd and asked them about their resses. She said the girl was not poor, but her mother was selfish nd didn't care for her. But Elnora showed a bank book the next ay, and declared that she paid for the things herself, so the Sin- on people must just have selected them. There's something pe- uliar about it, but nothing wrong, I am sure. I'll encourage Ellen) ask her again."

"I should say so, especially if she is going to keep on giving way her lunch."

"She lunched with the Bird Woman one day this week."

"She did!"

"Yes, she lives out by the Limberlost. You know the Bird Voman works there a great deal, and probably knows her that ay. I think the girl gathers specimens for her. Ellen says she nows more than the teachers about any nature question that omes up, and she is going to lead all of them in mathematics, nd make them work in any branch."

When Elnora entered the coat room after having had lunch- on with Ellen Brownlee there was such a difference in the at- nosphere that she could feel it.

"I am almost sorry I have these clothes," she said to Ellen.

"In the name of sense, why?" cried the astonished girl.

"Everyone is so nice to me in them, it sets me to wondering in time I could have made them be equally friendly in the thers."

Ellen looked at her introspectively. "I believe you could," she nnounced at last. "But it would have taken time and heartache, nd your mind would have been less free to work on your studies. Vo one is happy without friends, and I just simply can't study vhen I am unhappy."

That night the Bird Woman made the last trip to the swamp. Every specimen she possibly could use had been purchased at a fair price, and three additions had been made to the bank book, carrying the total a little past two hundred dollars. There remained the Indian relics to sell on Saturday, and Elnora had secured the order to furnish material for nature work for the grades. Life suddenly grew very full. There was the most excitingly interesting work for every hour, and that work was to pay high school expenses and start the college fund. There was one little rift in her joy. All of it would have been so much better if she could have told her mother, and given the money into her keeping; but the struggle to get a start had been so terrible, Elnora was afraid to take the risk. When she reached home, she only told her mother that the last of the things had been sold that evening.

"I think," said Mrs. Comstock, "that we will ask Wesley to move that box over here back of the garden for you. There you are apt to get tolled farther into the swamp than you intend to go, and you might mire or something. There ought to be just the same things in our woods, and along our swampy places, as there are in the Limberlost. Can't you hunt your stuff here?"

"I can try," said Elnora. "I don't know what I can find until I do. Our woods are undisturbed, and there is a possibility they might be even better hunting than the swamp. But I wouldn't have Freckles's case moved for the world. He might come back some day, and not like it. I've tried to keep his room the best I could, and taking out the box would make a big hole in one side of it. Store boxes don't cost much. I will have Uncle Wesley buy me one, and set it up wherever hunting looks the best, early in the spring. I would feel safer at home."

"Shall we do the work or have supper first?"

"Let's do the work," said Elnora. "I can't say that I'm hungry now. Doesn't seem as if I ever could be hungry again with such a lunch. I am quite sure no one carried more delicious things to eat than I."

Mrs. Comstock was pleased. "I put in a pretty good hunk of cake. Did you divide it with anyone?"

"Why, yes, I did," admitted Elnora.

"Who?"

This was becoming uncomfortable. "I ate the biggest piece myself," said Elnora, "and gave the rest to a couple of boys named Jimmy and Billy and a girl named Belle. They said it was the very best cake they ever tasted in all their lives."

Mrs. Comstock sat straight. "I used to be a master hand at spice cake," she boasted. "But I'm a little out of practice. I must get to work again. With the very weeds growing higher than our heads, we should raise plenty of good stuff to eat on this land, if we can't afford anything else but taxes."

Elnora laughed and hurried upstairs to change her dress. Margaret Sinton came that night bringing a beautiful blue one in its place, and carried away the other to launder.

"Do you mean to say those dresses are to be washed every two days?" questioned Mrs. Comstock.

"They have to be, to look fresh," replied Margaret. "We want our girl sweet as a rose."

"Well, of all things!" cried Mrs. Comstock. "Every two days! Any girl who can't keep a dress clean longer than that is a dirty girl. You'll wear the goods out and fade the colors with so much washing."

"We'll have a clean girl, anyway."

"Well, if you like the job you can have it," said Mrs. Comstock. "I don't mind the washing, but I'm so inconvenient with an iron."

Elnora sat late that night working over her lessons. The next morning she put on her blue dress and ribbon and in those she was a picture. Mrs. Comstock caught her breath with a queer stirring around her heart, and looked twice to be sure of what she saw. As Elnora gathered her books her mother silently gave her the lunch box.

"Feels heavy," said Elnora gaily. "And smelly! Like as not I'll be called upon to divide again."

"Then you divide!" said Mrs. Comstock. "Eating is the one thing we don't have to economize on, Elnora. Spite of all I can do food goes to waste in this soil every day. If you can give some

of those city children a taste of the real thing, why, don't b selfish."

Elnora went down the road thinking of the city children with whom she probably would divide. Of course, the bridge would b occupied again. So she stopped and opened the box.

"I don't want to be selfish," murmured Elnora, "but it reall seems as if I can't give away this lunch. If mother did not put lov into it, she's substituted something that's likely to fool me."

She almost felt her steps lagging as she approached the bridge A very hungry dog had been added to the trio of children. Elnor loved all dogs, and as usual, this one came to her in friendliness The children said "Good morning!" with alacrity, and anothe paper parcel lay conspicuous.

"How are you this morning?" inquired Elnora.

"All right!" cried the three, while the dog sniffed ravenously a the lunch box, and beat a perfect tattoo with his tail.

"How did you like the bologna?" questioned Billy eagerly.

"One of the girls took me to lunch at her home yesterday," an swered Elnora.

Dawn broke beautifully over Billy's streaked face. He caugh the package and thrust it toward Elnora.

"Then maybe you'd like to try the bologna today!"

The dog leaped in glad apprehension of something, and Bell scrambled to her feet and took a step forward. The look of fam ished greed in her eyes was more than Elnora could endure. I was not that she cared for the food so much. Good things to ea had been in abundance all her life. She wanted with this lunc to try to absorb what she felt must be an expression of some sor from her mother, and if it were not a manifestation of love, sh did not know what to think it. But it was her mother who ha said "be generous." She knelt on the bridge. "Keep back th dog!" she warned the elder boy.

She opened the box and divided the milk between Billy an the girl. She gave each a piece of cake leaving one and a sand wich. Billy pressed forward eagerly, bitter disappointment on hi face, and the elder boy forgot his charge.

"Aw, I thought they'd be meat!" lamented Billy.

Elnora could not endure that.

"There is!" she said gladly. "There is a little pigeon bird. I nt a teeny piece of the breast, for a sort of keepsake, just one e, and you can have the rest among you."

Elnora drew the knife from its holder and cut off the wish-ne. Then she held the bird toward the girl.

"You can divide it," she said. The dog made a bound and zing the squab sprang from the bridge and ran for life. The l and boy hurried after him. With awful eyes Billy stared and ore tempestuously. Elnora caught him and clapped her hand er the little mouth. A delivery wagon came tearing down the eet, the horse running full speed, passed the fleeing dog with e girl and boy in pursuit, and stopped at the bridge. High school ls began to roll from all sides of it.

"A rescue! A rescue!" they shouted.

It was Ellen Brownlee and her crowd, and every girl of them rried a big parcel. They took in the scene as they approached. ie fleeing dog with something in its mouth, the half-naked girl d boy chasing it told the story. Those girls screamed with laugh-as they watched the pursuit.

"Thank goodness, I saved the wishbone!" said Elnora. "As ual, I can prove that there was a bird." She turned toward e box. Billy had improved the time. He had the last piece of ke in one hand, and the last bite of salad disappeared in one eat gulp. Then the girls shouted again.

"Let's have a sample ourselves," suggested one. She caught the box and handed out the remaining sandwich. Another l divided it into bites each little over an inch square, and then e lifted the cup lid and deposited a preserved strawberry on ch bite. "One, two, three, altogether now!" she cried.

"You old mean things!" screamed Billy.

In an instant he was down in the road and handfuls of dust gan to fly among them. The girls scattered before him.

"Billy!" cried Elnora. "Billy! I'll never give you another bite, you throw dust on anyone!"

Then Billy dropped the dust, bored both fists into his eyes, and d sobbing into Elnora's new blue skirt. She stooped to meet

him and consolation began. Those girls laughed on. The screamed and shouted until the little bridge shook.

"Tomorrow might as well be a clear day," said Ellen, pas ing around and feeding the remaining berries to the girls as the could compose themselves enough to take them. "Billy, I admi your taste more than your temper."

Elnora looked up. "The little soul is nothing but skin an bones," she said. "I never was really hungry myself; were any you?"

"Well, I should say so," cried a plump, rosy girl. "I'm fam ished right now. Let's have breakfast immediate!"

"We got to refill this box first!" said Ellen Brownlee. "Who got the butter?" A girl advanced with a wooden tray.

"Put it in the preserve cup, a little strawberry flavor won hurt it. Next!" called Ellen.

A loaf of bread was produced and Ellen cut off a piece whic filled the sandwich box.

"Next!" A bottle of olives was unwrapped. The grocer's bo who was waiting opened that, and Ellen filled the salad dish.

"Next!"

A bag of macaroons was produced and the cake compartme filled.

"Next!"

"I don't suppose this will make quite as good dog feed as bird," laughed a girl holding open a bag of sliced ham whi Ellen filled the meat dish.

"Next!"

A box of candy was handed her and she stuffed every corn of the lunch box with chocolates and nougat. Then it was clos and formally presented to Elnora. The girls each helped ther selves to candy and olives, and gave Billy the remainder of t food. Billy took one bite of ham, and approved. Belle and Jimn had given up chasing the dog, and angry and ashamed, sto waiting half a block away.

"Come back!" cried Billy. "You great big dunces, come bac They's a new kind of meat, and cake and candy."

The boy delayed, but the girl joined Billy. Ellen wiped her fi

ers, stepped to the cement abutment and began reciting "Ho-
atio at the Bridge!" substituting Elnora wherever the hero ap-
eared in the lines.

Elnora gathered up the sacks, and gave them to Belle, telling
er to take the food home, cut and spread the bread, set things on
he table, and eat nicely.

Then Elnora was taken into the wagon with the girls, and
riven on the run to the high school. They sang a song begin-
ing—

"Elnora, please give me a sandwich.
I'm ashamed to ask for cake"

s they went. Elnora did not know it, but that was her initiation.
he belonged to "the crowd." She only knew that she was happy,
nd vaguely wondered what her mother and Aunt Margaret
ould have said about the proceedings.

CHAPTER VII

Wherein Mrs. Comstock Manipulates Margaret, and Billy Acquires a Residence

SATURDAY morning Elnora helped her mother with the work. When she had finished Mrs. Comstock told her to go to Sinton's and wash her Indian relics, so that she would be ready to accompany Wesley to town in the afternoon. Elnora hurried down the road and was soon at the cistern with a tub busily washing arrow points, stone axes, tubes, pipes, and skin-cleaning implements.

Then she went home, dressed and was waiting when the carriage reached the gate. She stopped at the bank with the box, and Sinton went to do his marketing and some shopping for his wife.

At the drygoods store Mr. Brownlee called to him: "Hello Sinton! How do you like the fate of your lunch box?" Then he began to laugh.

"I always hate to see a man laughing alone," said Sinton. "It looks so selfish! Tell me the fun, and let me help you."

Mr. Brownlee wiped his eyes.

"I supposed you knew, but I see she hasn't told."

Then the three days' history of the lunch box was repeated with particulars which included the dog.

"Now laugh!" concluded Mr. Brownlee.

"Blest if I see anything funny!" replied Wesley Sinton. "And if you had bought that box and furnished one of those lunches yourself, you wouldn't either. I call such a work a shame! I'll have it stopped."

"Someone must see to that, all right. They are little leeches

heir father earns enough to support them, but they have no other, and they run wild. I suppose they are crazy for cooked od. But it is funny, and when you think it over you will see it, if u don't now."

"About where would a body find that father?" inquired Wesley nton grimly. Mr. Brownlee told him and he started, locating the use with little difficulty. House was the proper word, for of me there was no sign. Just a small empty house with three unpt little children racing through and around it. The girl and e elder boy hung back, but dirty little Billy greeted Sinton with: What you want here?"

"I want to see your father," said Sinton.

"Well, he's asleep," said Billy.

"Where?" asked Sinton.

"In the house," answered Billy, "and you can't wake him."

"Well, I'll try," said Wesley.

Billy led the way. "There he is!" he said. "He is drunk again." On a dirty mattress in a corner lay a man who appeared to be ong and well. Billy was right. You could not awake him. He d gone the limit, and a little beyond. He was now facing eter-y. Sinton went out and closed the door.

"Your father is sick and needs help," he said. "You stay here, d I will send a man to see him."

"If you just let him 'lone, he'll sleep it off," volunteered Billy. He's that way all the time, but he wakes up and gets us some-ng to eat after awhile. Only waitin' twists you up inside pretty d."

The boy wore no air of complaint. He was merely stating facts. Wesley Sinton looked intently at Billy. "Are you twisted up in-e now?" he asked.

Billy laid a grimy hand on the region of his stomach and the hy little waist sank close to the backbone. "Bet yer life, boss," said cheerfully.

"How long have you been twisted?" asked Sinton.

Billy appealed to the others. "When was it we had the stuff on e bridge?"

"Yesterday morning," said the girl.

"Is that all gone?" asked Sinton.

"She went and told us to take it home," said Billy rueful "and 'cos she said to, we took it. Pa had come back, he w drinking some more, and he ate a lot of it—almost the wh thing, and it made him sick as a dog, and he went and wast all of it. Then he got drunk some more, and now he's asle again. We didn't get hardly none."

"You children sit on the steps until the man comes," said Si ton. "I'll send you some things to eat with him. What's yo name, sonny?"

"Billy," said the boy.

"Well, Billy, I guess you better come with me. I'll take ca of him," Sinton promised the others. He reached a hand to Bil

"I ain't no baby, I'm a boy!" said Billy, as he shuffled alo beside Sinton, taking a kick at every movable object witho regard to his battered toes.

Once they passed a Great Dane dog lolling after its mast and Billy ascended Sinton as if he were a tree, and clung to hi with trembling hot hands.

"I ain't afraid of that dog," scoffed Billy, as he was aga placed on the walk, "but onc't he took me for a rat or somepi and his teeth cut into my back. If I'd 'a' done right, I'd 'a' took t law on him."

Sinton looked down into the indignant little face. The chi was bright enough, he had a good head, but oh, such a body!

"I 'bout got enough of dogs," said Billy. "I used to like 'e but I'm getting pretty tired. You ought to seen the lickin' Jimm and Belle and me give our dog when we caught him, for taking little bird she gave us. We waited till he was asleep 'nen laid board on him and all of us jumped on it to onc't. You could heard him yell a mile. Belle said mebbe we could squeeze t bird out of him. But, squeeze nothing! He was holler as us, a that bird was lost long 'fore it got to his stummick. It was ist little one, anyway. Belle said it wouldn't 'a' made a bite apie for three of us nohow, and the dog got one good swaller. W didn't get much of the meat, either. Pa took most of that. Seen like pas and dogs gets everything."

Billy laughed dolefully. Involuntarily Wesley Sinton reached
hand. They were coming into the business part of Onabasha
d the streets were crowded. Billy understood it to mean that he
ght lose his companion and took a grip. That little hot hand
nging tight to his, the sore feet recklessly scouring the walk,
e hungry child panting for breath as he tried to keep even, the
ave soul jesting in the face of hard luck, caught Sinton in a
nder, empty spot.

"Say, son," he said. "How would you like to be washed clean,
d have all the supper your skin could hold, and sleep in a good
d?"

"Aw, gee!" said Billy. "I ain't dead yet! Them things is in
aven! Poor folks can't have them. Pa said so."

"Well, you can have them if you want to go with me and get
em," promised Sinton.

"Honest?"

"Yes, honest."

"Crost yer heart?"

"Yes," said Sinton.

"Kin I take some to Jimmy and Belle?"

"If you'll come with me and be my boy, I'll see that they have
enty."

"What will pa say?"

"Your pa is in that kind of sleep now where he won't wake
, Billy," said Sinton. "I am pretty sure the law will give you
me, if you want to come."

"When people don't ever wake up they're dead," announced
lly. "Is my pa dead?"

"Yes, he is," answered Sinton.

"And you'll take care of Jimmy and Belle, too?"

"I can't adopt all three of you," said Sinton. "I'll take you,
nd see that they are well provided for. Will you come?"

"Yep, I'll come," said Billy. "Let's eat, first thing we do."

"All right," agreed Sinton. "Come into this restaurant." He
fted Billy to the lunch counter and ordered the clerk to give
im as many glasses of milk as he wanted, and a biscuit. "I think

there's going to be fried chicken when we get home, Billy," I said, "so you just take the edge off now, and fill up later."

While Billy lunched Sinton called up the different departmen and notified the proper authorities ending with the Women's R lief Association. He sent a basket of food to Belle and Jimm bought Billy a pair of trousers, and a shirt, and went to brin Elnora.

"Why, Uncle Wesley!" cried the girl. "Where did you fin Billy?"

"I've adopted him for the time being, if not longer," replie Wesley Sinton.

"Where did you get him?"

"Well, young woman," said Wesley Sinton, "Mr. Brownlee tol me the history of your lunch box. It didn't seem so funny to m as it does to the rest of them; so I went to look up the father Billy's family, and make him take care of them, or allow the la to do it for him. It will have to be the law."

"He's deader than anything!" broke in Billy. "He can't eve take all the meat any more."

"Billy!" gasped Elnora.

"Never you mind!" said Sinton. "A child doesn't say suc things about a father who loved and raised him right. When happens, the father alone is to blame. You won't hear Billy tal like that about me when I cross over."

"You don't mean you are going to take him to keep!"

"I'll soon need help," said Wesley. "Billy will come in jus about right ten years from now, and if I raise him I'll have hin the way I want him."

"But Aunt Margaret doesn't like boys," objected Elnora.

"Well, she likes me, and I used to be a boy. Anyway, as remember she has had her way about everything at our hous ever since we were married. I am going to please myself abou Billy. Hasn't she always done just as she chose so far as you know Honest, Elnora!"

"Honest!" replied Elnora. "You are beautiful to all of us Uncle Wesley; but Aunt Margaret won't like Billy. She won' want him in her home."

"In our home," corrected Wesley.

"What makes you want him?" marveled Elnora.

"God only knows," said Sinton. "Billy ain't so beautiful, and e ain't so smart, I guess it's because he's so human. My heart oes out to him."

"So did mine," said Elnora. "I love him. I'd rather see him eat ıy lunch than have it myself any time."

"What makes you like him?" asked Wesley.

"Why, I don't know," pondered Elnora. "He's so little, he eeds so much, he's got such splendid grit, and he's perfectly nselfish with his brother and sister. But we must wash him be- ore Aunt Margaret sees him. I wonder if mother——"

"You needn't bother. I'm going to take him home the way he ," said Sinton. "I want Maggie to see the worst of it."

"I'm afraid——" began Elnora.

"So am I," said Wesley, "but I won't give him up. He's taken sort of grip on my heart. I've always been crazy for a boy. Don't et him hear us."

"Don't let him be killed!" cried Elnora. During their talk Billy ad wandered to the edge of the walk and barely escaped the vheels of a passing automobile in an effort to catch a stray kitten hat seemed in danger.

Wesley drew Billy back to the walk, and held his hand closely. Are you ready, Elnora?"

"Yes; you were gone a long time," she said.

Wesley glanced at a package she carried. "Have to have nother book?" he asked.

"No, I bought this for mother. I've had such splendid luck elling my specimens, I didn't feel right about keeping all the noney for myself, so I saved enough from the Indian relics to get . few things I wanted. I would have liked to have gotten her a lress, but I didn't dare, so I compromised on a book."

"What did you select, Elnora?" asked Wesley wonderingly.

"Well," said she, "I have noticed mother always seemed nterested in anything Mark Twain wrote in the newspapers, and thought it would cheer her up a little, so I just got his 'Inno-

cents Abroad.' I haven't read it myself, but I've seen mention made of it all my life, and the critics say it's genuine fun."

"Good!" cried Sinton. "Good! You've made a splendid choice. It will take her mind off herself a lot. But she will scold you."

"Of course," assented Elnora. "But possibly she will read it and feel better. I'm going to serve her a trick. I am going to hide it until Monday, and set it on her little shelf of books the last thing before I go away. She must have all of them by heart. When she sees a new one she can't help being glad, for she loves to read, and if she has all day to become interested, maybe she'll like it so she won't scold so much."

"We are both in for it, but I guess we are prepared. I don't know what Margaret will say, but I'm going to take Billy home and see. Maybe he can win with her, as he did with us."

Elnora had doubts, but she did not say anything more. When they started home Billy sat on the front seat. He drove with the hitching strap tied to the railing of the dashboard, flourished the whip, and yelled with delight. At first Sinton laughed with him, but by the time he left Elnora with several packages at her gate, he was looking serious enough.

Margaret was at the door as they drove up the lane. Wesley left Billy in the carriage, hitched the horses and went to explain to her. He had not reached her before she cried, "Look, Wesley, that child! You'll have a runaway!"

Wesley looked and ran. Billy was standing in the carriage slashing the mettlesome horses with the whip.

"See me make 'em go!" he shouted as the whip fell a second time.

He did make them go. They took the hitching posts and a few fence palings, which scraped the paint from a wheel. Sinton missed the lines at the first effort, but the dragging post impeded the horses, and he soon caught them. He led them to the barn, and ordered Billy to remain in the carriage while he unhitched. Then leading Billy and carrying his packages he entered the yard.

"You run play a few minutes, Billy," he said. "I want to talk to the nice lady."

The nice lady was looking rather stupefied as Wesley ap-
oached her.

'Where in the name of sense did you get that awful child?"
demanded.

'He is a young gentleman who has been stopping Elnora and
ing her lunch every day, part of the time with the assistance of
brother and sister, while our girl went hungry. Brownlee told
about it at the store. It's happened three days running. The
t time she went without anything, the second time Brownlee's
l took her to lunch, and the third a crowd of high school girls
ught a lot of stuff and met them at the bridge. The youngsters
med to think they could rob her every day, so I went to see
ir father about having it stopped."

"Well, I should think so!" cried Margaret.

"There were three of them, Margaret," said Wesley, "that little
low——"

"Hyena, you mean," interpolated Margaret.

"Hyena," corrected Wesley gravely, "and another boy and a
l, all equally dirty and hungry. The man was dead. They
ought he was in a drunken sleep, but he was stone dead. I
ought the little boy with me, and sent the officers and other
lp to the house. He's half starved. I want to wash him, and put
an clothes on him, and give him some supper."

"Have you got anything to put on him?"

"Yes."

"Where did you get it?"

"Bought it. It ain't much. All I got didn't cost a dollar."

"A dollar is a good deal when you work and save for it the way
e do."

"Well, I don't know a better place to put it. Have you got
y hot water? I'll use this tub at the cistern. Please give me some
ap and towels."

Instead Margaret pushed by him with a shriek. Billy had
ayed by producing a cord from his pocket, and having tied the
ils of Margaret's white kittens together, he had climbed on a
ox and hung them across the clothes line. Wild with fright the
ttens were clawing each other to death, and the air was white

with fur. The string had twisted and the frightened creatur could not recognize friends. Margaret stepped back with blee ing hands. Sinton cut the cord with his knife and the poor lit cats raced under the house bleeding and disfigured. Margar white with wrath faced Wesley.

"If you don't hitch up and take that animal back to town she said, "I will."

Billy threw himself on the grass and began to scream.

"You said I could have fried chicken for supper," he waile "You said she was a nice lady!"

Wesley lifted him and something in his manner of handli the child infuriated Margaret. His touch was so gentle. S reached for Billy and gripped his shirt collar in the back. Wesley hand closed over hers.

"Gently, girl!" he said. "This little body is covered with sores

"Sores!" she ejaculated. "Sores? What kind of sores?"

"Oh, they might be from bruises made by fists or boot toe or they might be bad blood, from wrong eating, or they mig be pure filth. Will you hand me some towels?"

"No, I won't!" said Margaret.

"Well, give me some rags, then."

Margaret compromised on pieces of old tablecloth. Wesley le Billy to the cistern, pumped cold water into the tub, poured in kettle of hot, and beginning at the head scoured him. The bo shut his little teeth, and said never a word though he twiste occasionally when the soap struck a raw spot. Margaret watche the process from the window in amazed and ever-increasin anger. Where did Wesley learn it? How could his big hands be gentle? He came to the door.

"Have you got any peroxide?" he asked.

"A little," she answered stiffly.

"Well, I need about a pint, but I'll begin on what you have

Margaret handed him the bottle. Wesley took a cup, weakene the drug and said to Billy: "Man, these sores on you must b healed. Then you must eat the kind of food that's fit for little me I am going to put some medicine on you, and it is going to stin like fire. If it just runs off, I won't use any more. If it boils, the

poison in these places, and they must be tied up, dosed every
ıy, and you must be washed, and kept mighty clean. Now, hold
ll, because I am going to put it on."

"I think the one on my leg is the worst," said the undaunted
lly, holding out a raw place. Sinton poured on the drug. Billy's
ody twisted and writhed, but he did not run.

"Gee, look at it boil!" he cried. "I guess they's poison. You'll
ave to do it to all of them."

Wesley's teeth were set, as he watched the boy's face. He
oured the drug, strong enough to do effective work, on a dozen
aces over that little body and bandaged all he could. Billy's
os quivered at times, and his chin jumped, but he did not shed
tear or utter a sound other than to take a deep interest in the
oiling. As Wesley put the small shirt on the boy, and fastened
e trousers, he was ready to reset the hitching post and mend
e fence without a word.

"Now am I clean?" asked Billy.

"Yes, you are clean outside," said Wesley. "There is some dirty
ood in your body, and some bad words in your mouth, that we
ave to get out, but that takes time. If we put right things to eat
to your stomach that will do away with the sores, and if you
now that I don't like bad words you won't say them any oftener
an you can help, will you, Billy?"

Billy leaned against Wesley in apparent indifference.

"I want to see me!" he demanded.

Wesley led the boy into the house, and lifted him to a mirror.

"My, I'm purty good-looking, ain't I?" bragged Billy. Then
Wesley stooped to set him on the floor Billy's lips passed close
the big man's ear and hastily whispered a vehement "No!"
he ran for the door.

"How long until supper, Margaret?" asked Wesley as he fol-
wed.

"You are going to keep him for supper?" she asked.

"Sure!" said Wesley. "That's what I brought him for. It's
ely he never had a good square meal of decent food in his
e. He's starved to the bone."

Margaret arose deliberately, removed the white cloth from the

supper table and substituted an old red one she used to wrap th bread. She put away the pretty dishes they commonly used an set the table with old plates for pies and kitchen utensils. But sh fried the chicken, and was generous with milk and honey, snow bread, gravy, potatoes, and fruit.

Wesley repainted the scratched wheel. He mended the fenc with Billy holding the nails and handing the pickets. Then h filled the old hole, dug a new one and set the hitching post.

Billy hopped on one foot at his task of holding the post steac as the earth was packed around it. There was not the shadow a trouble on his little freckled face. Sinton threw in stones an pounded the earth solid around the post. The sound of a gulpin sob attracted him to Billy. The tears were rolling down h cheeks. "If I'd 'a' knowed you'd have to get down in a hole an work so hard, I wouldn't 'a' hit the horses," he said.

"Never you mind, Billy," said Wesley. "You will know ne time, so you can think over it, and make up your mind wheth you really want to before you strike."

Wesley went to the barn to put away the tools. He thought Bil was at his heels, but the boy lagged on the way. A big snow turkey gobbler resented the small intruder in his especial pr serves, and with spread tail and dragging wings came toward hi threateningly. If that turkey gobbler had known the sort things with which Billy was accustomed to holding his own, h never would have issued the challenge. Billy accepted instantly. H danced around with stiff arms at his sides and imitated the gob bler. Then came his opportunity, and he jumped on the b turkey's back. Wesley heard Margaret's scream in time to se the flying leap and admire its dexterity. The turkey tucked its ta and scampered. Billy slid from its back and as he fell he clutche wildly, caught the folded tail, and instinctively clung to it. Th turkey gave one scream and relaxed its muscles. Then it fled i disfigured defeat to the haystack. Billy scrambled to his fe holding the tail, while his eyes were bulging.

"Why, the blasted old thing came off!" he said to Wesle holding out the tail in amazed wonder.

The man, caught suddenly, forgot everything and roare

eing which, Billy thought a turkey tail of no account and flung at one high above him shouting in wild childish laughter, when e feathers scattered and fell.

Margaret, watching, began to cry. Wesley had gone mad. For e first time in her married life she wanted to tell her mother. hen Wesley had waited until he was so hungry he could wait no nger he invaded the kitchen to find a cooked supper baking on e back of the stove, while Margaret with red eyes nursed a pair demoralized white kittens.

"Is supper ready?" he asked.

"It has been for an hour," answered Margaret.

"Why didn't you call us?"

That "us" had too much comradeship in it. It irritated Mar-ret.

"I supposed it would take you even longer than this to fix ings decent again. As for my turkey, and my poor little kittens, ey don't matter."

"I am mighty sorry about them, Margaret, you know that. Billy very bright, and he will soon learn——"

" 'Soon learn'!" cried Margaret. "Wesley Sinton, you don't ean to say that you think of keeping that creature here for some ne?"

"No, I think of keeping a well-behaved little boy."

Margaret set the supper on the table. Seeing the old red cloth esley stared in amazement. Then he understood. Billy capered ound in delight.

"Ain't that pretty?" he exulted. "I wish Jimmy and Belle could e. We, why we ist eat out of our hands or off a old drygoods box, nd when we fix up a lot, we have newspaper. We ain't ever had nice red cloth like this."

Wesley looked straight at Margaret, so intently that she turned way, her face flushing. He stacked the dictionary and the geog-phy of the world on a chair, and lifted Billy beside him. He eaped a plate generously, cut the food, put a fork into Billy's tle fist, and made him eat slowly and properly. Billy did his st. Occasionally greed overcame him, and he used his left hand pop a bite into his mouth with his fingers. These lapses Wesley

patiently overlooked, and went on with his general instruction
Luckily Billy did not spill anything on his clothing or the clot
After supper Wesley took him to the barn while he finished th
night work. Then he went and sat beside Margaret on the fro
porch. Billy appropriated the hammock, and swung by pulling
rope tied around a tree. The very energy with which he we
at the work of swinging himself appealed to Wesley.

"Mercy, but he's an active little body," he said. "There isn
a lazy bone in him. See how he works to pay for his fun."

"There goes his foot through it!" cried Margaret. "Wesley, h
shall not ruin my hammock."

"Of course he shan't!" said Wesley. "Wait, Billy, let me sho
you."

Thereupon he explained to Billy that ladies wearing beautif
white dresses sat in hammocks, so little boys must not put the
dusty feet in them. Billy immediately sat, and allowed his fe
to swing.

"Margaret," said Wesley after a long silence on the porch
"isn't it true that if Billy had been a half-starved sore cat, dog, o
animal of any sort, that you would have pitied, and helped ca
for it, and been glad to see me get any pleasure out of it I could?

"Yes," said Margaret coldly.

"But because I brought a child with an immortal soul, there
no welcome."

"That isn't a child, it's an animal."

"You just said you would have welcomed an animal."

"Not a wild one. I meant a tame beast."

"Billy is not a beast!" said Wesley hotly. "He is a very dea
little boy. Margaret, you've always done the churchgoing an
Bible reading for this family. How do you reconcile that 'Suffe
little children to come unto Me' with the way you are treatin
Billy?"

Margaret arose. "I haven't treated that child. I have only le
him alone. I can barely hold myself. He needs the hide tanne
about off him!"

"If you'd cared to look at his body, you'd know that yo
couldn't find a place to strike without cutting into a raw spot,

d Wesley. "Besides, Billy has not done a thing for which a
ild should be punished. He is only full of life, no training, and
th a boy's love of mischief. He did abuse your kittens, but an
ur before I saw him risk his life to save one from being run
er. He minds what you tell him, and doesn't do anything he is
d not to. He thinks of his brother and sister right away when
ything pleases him. He took that stinging medicine with the
t of a bulldog. He is just a bully little chap, and I love him."
"Oh, good heavens!" cried Margaret, going into the house as
e spoke.
Sinton sat still. At last Billy tired of the swing, came to him
d leaned his slight body against the big knee.
"Am I going to sleep here?" he asked.
"Sure you are!" said Sinton.
Billy swung his feet as he laid across Wesley's knee. "Come on,"
d Wesley, "I must clean you up for bed."
"You have to be just awful clean here," announced Billy. "I
e to be clean, you feel so good, after the hurt is over."
Sinton registered that remark, and worked with especial tender-
ss as he redressed the ailing places and washed the dust from
ly's feet and hands.
"Where can he sleep?" he asked Margaret.
"I'm sure I don't know," she answered.
"Oh, I can sleep ist any place," said Billy. "On the floor or
ywhere. Home, I sleep on pa's coat on a storebox, and Jimmy
d Belle they sleep on the storebox, too. I sleep between them,
s I don't roll off and crack my head. Ain't you got a storebox
d a old coat?"
Wesley arose and opened a folding lounge. Then he brought
armload of clean horse blankets from a closet.
"These don't look like the nice white bed a little boy should
ve, Billy," he said, "but we'll make them do. This will beat a
rebox all hollow."
Billy took a long leap for the lounge. When he found it bounced,
proceeded to bounce, until he was tired. By that time the
nkets had to be refolded. Wesley had Billy take one end and
p, while both of them seemed to enjoy the job. Then Billy lay

down and curled up in his clothes like a small dog. But sle would not come. Finally he sat up. He stared around restless Then he arose, went to Wesley, and leaned against his knee. I picked up the boy and folded his arms around him. Billy sigh in rapturous content.

"That bed feels so lost like," he said. "Jimmy always jabb me on one side, and Belle on the other, and so I knew I was the Do you know where they are?"

"They are with kind people who gave them a fine supper clean bed, and will always take good care of them."

"I wisht I was"——Billy hesitated and looked earnestly Wesley. "I mean I wish they was here."

"You are about all I can manage, Billy," said Wesley.

Billy sat up. "Can't she manage anything?" he asked, wavi toward Margaret.

"Indeed, yes," said Wesley. "She has managed me for twe years."

"My, but she made you nice!" said Billy. "I just love y I wisht she'd take Jimmy and Belle and make them nice as you

"She isn't strong enough to do that, Billy. They will grow i a good boy and girl where they are."

Billy slid from Wesley's arms and walked toward Marga until he reached the middle of the room. Then he stopped, a at last sat on the floor. Finally he lay down and closed his ey "This feels more like my bed; if only Jimmy and Belle was h to crowd up a little, so it wasn't so alone like."

"Won't I do, Billy?" asked Wesley in a husky voice.

Billy moved restlessly. "Seems like—seems like- -toward ni as if a body got kind o' lonesome for a woman person—like he

Billy indicated Margaret and then closed his eyes so tight small face wrinkled.

Soon he was up again. " 'Wisht I had Snap," he said. "Oh ist wisht I had Snap!"

"I thought you laid a board on Snap and jumped on it," s Wesley.

"We did!" cried Billy—"oh, you ought to heard him squea Billy laughed loudly, then his face clouded. "But I want Sn

lay beside me so bad now—that if he was here I'd give him piece of my chicken 'fore I ate any. Do you like dogs?"

"Yes, I do," said Wesley.

Billy was up instantly. "Would you like Snap?"

"I am sure I would," said Wesley.

"Would she?" Billy indicated Margaret. And then he answered s own question. "But of course, she wouldn't, cos she likes cats, id dogs chases cats. Oh dear, I thought for a minute maybe iap could come here." Billy lay down and closed his eyes solutely.

Suddenly they flew open. "Does it hurt to be dead?" he manded.

"Nothing hurts you after you are dead, Billy," said Wesley.

"Yes, but I mean does it hurt getting to be dead?"

"Sometimes it does. It did not hurt your father, Billy. It came ftly while he was asleep."

"It ist came softly?"

"Yes."

"I kind o' wisht he wasn't dead!" said Billy. "Course I like stay with you, and the fried chicken, and the nice soft bed, and -and everything, and I like to be clean, but he took us to the ow, and he got us gum, and he never hurt us when he wasn't unk."

Billy drew a deep breath, and tightly closed his eyes. But very on they opened. Then he sat up. He looked at Wesley pitifully, id then he glanced at Margaret. "You don't like boys, do you?" questioned.

"I like good boys," said Margaret.

Billy was at her knee instantly. "Well say, I'm a good boy!" announced joyously.

"I do not think boys who hurt helpless kittens and pull out rkeys' tails are good boys."

"Yes, but I didn't hurt the kittens," explained Billy. "They got ad 'bout ist a little fun and scratched each other. I didn't ose they'd act like that. And I didn't pull the turkey's tail. I ist ld on to the first thing I grabbed, and the turkey pulled. Honest, was the turkey pulled." He turned to Wesley. "You tell her!

Didn't the turkey pull? I didn't know its tail was loose, did I?

"I don't think you did, Billy," said Wesley.

Billy stared into Margaret's cold face. "Sometimes at nigh Belle sits on the floor, and I lay my head in her lap. I could pu up a chair and lay my head in your lap. Like this, I mean." Bil pulled up a chair, climbed on it and laid his head on Margaret lap. Then he shut his eyes again. Margaret could have looke little more repulsed if he had been a snake. Billy was soon up.

"My, but your lap is hard," he said. "And you are a good de fatter 'an Belle, too!" He slid from the chair and came back t the middle of the room.

"Oh but I wisht he wasn't dead!" he cried. The flood brok and Billy screamed in desperation.

Out of the night a soft, warm young figure flashed throug the door and with a swoop caught him in her arms. She droppe into a chair, nestled him closely, drooped her fragrant brown hea over his little bullet-eyed red one, and rocked softly while sh crooned over him—

"Billy, boy, where have you been?
Oh, I have been to seek a wife,
She's the joy of my life,
But then she's a young thing and she can't leave her mammy!"

Billy clung to her frantically. Elnora wiped his eyes, kissed h face, swayed and sang.

"Why aren't you asleep?" she asked at last.

"I don't know," said Billy. "I tried. I tried awful hard c I thought he wanted me to, but it ist wouldn't come. Please te her I tried." He appealed to Margaret.

"He did try to go to sleep," admitted Margaret.

"Maybe he can't sleep in his clothes," suggested Elnor "Haven't you an old dressing sacque? I could roll the sleeves.

Margaret got an old sacque, and Elnora put it on Billy. The she brought a basin of water and bathed his face and hea She gathered him up and began to rock again.

"Have you got a pa?" asked Billy.

"No," said Elnora.

"Is he dead like mine?"

"Yes."

"Did it hurt him to die?"

"I don't know."

Billy was wide awake again. "It didn't hurt my pa," he asted. "He ist died while he was asleep. He didn't even know it as coming."

"I am glad of that," said Elnora, pressing the small head gainst her breast again.

Billy escaped her hand and sat up. "I guess I won't go to eep," he said. "It might 'come softly' and get me."

"It won't get you, Billy," said Elnora, rocking and singing tween sentences. "It doesn't get little boys. It just takes big ople who are sick."

"Was my pa sick?"

"Yes," said Elnora. "He had a dreadful sickness inside him at burned, and made him drink things. That was why he would rget his little boys and girl. If he had been well, he would have tten you good things to eat, clean clothes, and had the most fun th you."

Billy leaned against her and closed his eyes, and Elnora rocked pefully.

"If I was dead would you cry?" he was up again.

"Yes, I would," said Elnora, gripping him closer until Billy most squealed with the embrace.

"Do you love me tight as that?" he questioned blissfully.

"Yes, bushels and bushels," said Elnora. "Better than any tle boy in the whole world."

Billy looked at Margaret. "She don't!" he said. "She'd be ad if it would get me 'softly,' right now. She don't want me re 't all."

Elnora smothered his face against her breast and rocked.

"You love me, don't you?"

"I will, if you will go to sleep."

"Every single day you will give me your dinner for the bologna, on't you," said Billy.

"Yes, I will," replied Elnora. "But you will have as good lunch

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as I do after this. You will have milk, eggs, chicken, all kinds good things, little pies, and cakes, maybe."

Billy shook his head. "I am going back home soon as it light," he said, "she don't want me. She thinks I'm a bad bo She's going to whip me—if he lets her. She said so. I heard he Oh, I wish he hadn't died! I want to go home." Billy shrieke again.

Mrs. Comstock had started to walk slowly to meet Elnor The girl had been so late that her mother reached the Sinto gate and followed the path until the picture inside became visibl Elnora had told her about Wesley taking Billy home. Mrs. Com stock had some curiosity to see how Margaret bore the unexpecte addition to her family. Billy's voice, raised with excitement, w plainly audible. She could see Elnora holding him, and hear h excited wail. Wesley's face was drawn and haggard, and Ma garet's set and defiant. A very imp of perversity entered the brea of Mrs. Comstock.

"Hoity, toity!" she said as she suddenly appeared in the doo "Blest if I ever heard a man making sounds like that before!

Billy ceased suddenly. Mrs. Comstock was tall, angular, and h hair was prematurely white. She was only thirty-six, althoug she appeared fifty. But there was an expression on her usual cold face that was attractive just then, and Billy was in searc of attractions.

"Have I stayed too late, mother?" asked Elnora anxiousl "I truly intended to come straight back, but I thought I coul rock Billy to sleep first. Everything is strange, and he's so nervous.

"Is that your ma?" demanded Billy.

"Yes."

"Does she love you?"

"Of course!"

"My mother didn't love me," said Billy. "She went away an left me, and never came back. She don't care what happens t me. You wouldn't go away and leave your little girl, would you? questioned Billy.

"No," said Katherine Comstock, "and I wouldn't leave a litt boy, either."

Billy began sliding from Elnora's knees.

"Do you like boys?" he questioned.

"If there is anything I love it is a boy," said Mrs. Comstock suringly. Billy was on the floor.

"Do you like dogs?"

"Yes. Almost as well as boys. I am going to buy a dog as soon I can find a good one."

Billy swept toward her with a whoop.

"Do you want a boy?" he shouted.

Katherine Comstock stretched out her arms, and gathered m in.

"Of course, I want a boy!" she rejoiced.

"Maybe you'd like to have me?" offered Billy.

"Sure I would," triumphed Mrs. Comstock. "Anyone would ke to have you. You are just a real boy, Billy."

"Will you take Snap?"

"I'd like to have Snap almost as well as you."

"Mother!" breathed Elnora imploringly. "Don't! Oh, don't! e thinks you mean it!"

"And so I do mean it," said Mrs. Comstock. "I'll take him a jiffy. I throw away enough to feed a little tyke like him every ay. His chatter would be great company while you are gone. lood soon can be purified with right food and baths, and as for nap, I meant to buy a bulldog, but possibly Snap will serve just well. All I ask of a dog is to bark at the right time. I'll do the st. Would you like to come and be my boy, Billy?"

Billy leaned against Mrs. Comstock, reached his arms around er neck and gripped her with all his puny might. "You can whip e all you want to," he said. "I won't make a sound."

Mrs. Comstock held him closely and her hard face was soften- g; of that there could be no doubt.

"Now, why would anyone whip a nice little boy like you?" ne asked wonderingly.

"She"—Billy from his refuge waved toward Margaret—"she as going to whip me 'cause her cats fought, when I tied their ils together and hung them over the line to dry. How did I know er old cats would fight?"

Mrs. Comstock began to laugh suddenly, and try as she wou she could not stop so soon as she desired. Billy studied her.

"Have you got turkeys?" he demanded.

"Yes, flocks of them," said Mrs. Comstock, vainly struggli to suppress her mirth, and settle her face in its accustom lines.

"Are their tails fast?" demanded Billy.

"Why, I think so," marveled Mrs. Comstock.

"Hers ain't!" said Billy with the wave toward Margaret th was becoming familiar. "Her turkey pulled, and its tail com right off. She's going to whip me if he lets her. I didn't kno the turkey would pull. I didn't know its tail would come off. won't ever touch one again, will I?"

"Of course, you won't," said Mrs. Comstock. "And wha more, I don't care if you do! I'd rather have a fine little man li you than all the turkeys in the country. Let them lose their o tails if they want to, and let the cats fight. Cats and turke don't compare with boys, who are going to be fine big men son of these days."

Then Billy and Mrs. Comstock hugged each other rapturousl while their audience stared in silent amazement.

"You like boys!" exulted Billy, and his head dropped again Mrs. Comstock in unspeakable content.

"Yes, and if I don't have to carry you the whole way hom we must start right now," said Mrs. Comstock. "You are goi to be asleep before you know it."

Billy opened his eyes and braced himself. "I can walk," he sa proudly.

"All right, we must start. Come, Elnora! Good night, folks Mrs. Comstock set Billy on the floor, and arose gripping his han "You take the other side, Elnora, and we will help him as muc as we can," she said.

Elnora stared piteously at Margaret, then at Wesley, an arose in white-faced bewilderment.

"Billy, are you going to leave without even saying good-by to me?" asked Wesley, with a gulp.

Billy held tight to Mrs. Comstock and Elnora.

"Good-bye!" he said casually. "I'll come and see you some
me."

Wesley Sinton gave a smothered sob, and strode from the room.

Mrs. Comstock started toward the door, dragging at Billy
hile Elnora pulled back, but Mrs. Sinton was before them,
er eyes flashing.

"Kate Comstock, you think you are mighty smart, don't you?"
e cried.

"I ain't in the lunatic asylum, where you belong, anyway,"
id Mrs. Comstock. "I am smart enough to tell a dandy boy
hen I see him, and I'm good and glad to get him. I'll love
have him!"

"Well, you won't have him!" exclaimed Margaret Sinton.
That boy is Wesley's! He found him, and brought him here.
ou can't come in and take him like that! Let go of him!"

"Not much, I won't!" cried Mrs. Comstock. "Leave the poor
ck little soul here for you to beat, because he didn't know just
ow to handle things! Of course, he'll make mistakes. He must
ave a lot of teaching, but not the kind he'll get from you!
lear out of my way!"

"You let go of our boy," ordered Margaret.

"Why? Do you want to whip him, before he can go to sleep?"
ered Mrs. Comstock.

"No, I don't!" said Margaret. "He's Wesley's, and nobody
all touch him. Wesley!"

Wesley Sinton appeared behind Margaret in the doorway, and
e turned to him. "Make Kate Comstock let go of our boy!"
e demanded.

"Billy, she wants you now," said Wesley Sinton. "She won't
hip you, and she won't let anyone else. You can have stacks of
ood things to eat, ride in the carriage, and have a great time.
Won't you stay with us?"

Billy drew away from Mrs. Comstock and Elnora.

He faced Margaret, his eyes shrewd with unchildish wisdom.
Necessity had taught him to strike the hot iron, to drive the hard
argain.

"Can I have Snap to live here always?" he demanded.

"Yes, you can have all the dogs you want," said Margar Sinton.

"Can I sleep close enough so's I can touch you?"

"Yes, you can move your lounge up so that you can ho my hand," said Margaret.

"Do you love me now?" questioned Billy.

"I'll try to love you, if you are a good boy," said Margare

"Then I guess I'll stay," said Billy, walking over to her.

Out in the night Elnora and her mother went down the ro in the moonlight; every few rods Mrs. Comstock laughed alou

"Mother, I don't understand you," sobbed Elnora.

"Well, maybe when you have gone to high school longer yo will," said Mrs. Comstock. "Anyway, you saw me bring Ma Sinton to her senses, didn't you?"

"Yes, I did," answered Elnora, "but I thought you were earnest. So did Billy, and Uncle Wesley, and Aunt Margaret

"Well, wasn't I?" inquired Mrs. Comstock.

"But you just said you brought Aunt Margaret to!"

"Well, didn't I?"

"I don't understand you."

"That's the reason I am recommending more schooling

Elnora took her candle and went to bed. Mrs. Comstock w feeling too good to sleep. Twice of late she really had enjoye herself for the first in sixteen years, and greediness for more the same feeling crept into her blood like intoxication. As sh sat brooding alone she knew the truth. She would have loved have taken Billy. She would not have minded his mischief, h chatter, or his dog. He would have meant a distraction from he self that she greatly needed; she was even sincere about the do She had intended to tell Wesley to buy her one at the very fir opportunity. Her last thought was of Billy. She chuckled softl for she was not saintly, and now she knew how she could even long score with Margaret and Wesley in a manner that woul fill her soul with grim satisfaction.

CHAPTER VIII

Wherein the Limberlost Tempts Elnora, and Billy Buries His Father

MMEDIATELY after dinner on Sunday Wesley Sinton stopped t the Comstock gate to ask if Elnora wanted to go to town ith them. Billy sat beside him and he did not appear as if he ere on his way to a funeral. Elnora said she had to study and ould not go, but she suggested that her mother take her place. Mrs. Comstock put on her hat and went at once, which surprised lnora. She did not know that her mother was anxious for an pportunity to speak with Sinton alone. Elnora knew why she as repeatedly cautioned not to leave their land, if she went pecimen hunting.

She studied two hours and was several lessons ahead of her lasses. There was no use to go further. She would take a walk nd see if she could gather any caterpillars or find any freshly pun cocoons. She searched the bushes and low trees behind the arden and all around the edge of the woods on their land, and aving little success, at last came to the road. Almost the first horn bush she examined yielded a Polyphemus cocoon. Elnora ifted her head with the instinct of a hunter on the chase, and egan work. She reached the swamp before she knew it, carrying ive fine cocoons of different species as her reward. She pushed ack her hair and gazed around longingly. A few rods inside she hought she saw cocoons on a bush, to which she went, and found everal. Sense of caution was rapidly vanishing; she was in a air way to forget everything and plunge into the swamp when

she thought she heard footsteps coming down the trail. Sh
went back, and came out almost facing Pete Corson.

That ended her difficulty. She had known him since chil
hood. When she sat on the front bench of the Brushwood schoo
house, Pete had been one of the big boys at the back of th
room. He had been rough and wild, but she never had been afra
of him, and often he had given her pretty things from th
swamp.

"What luck!" she cried. "I promised mother I would not g
inside the swamp alone, and will you look at the cocoons I'v
found! There are more just screaming for me to come get them
because the leaves will fall with the first frost, and then the ja
and crows will begin to tear them open. I haven't much tim
since I'm going to school. You will go with me, Pete! Please sa
yes! Just a little way!"

"What are those things?" asked the man, his keen black ey
staring at her.

"They are the cases these big caterpillars spin for winter, an
in the spring they come out great night moths, and I can se
them. Oh, Pete, I can sell them for enough to take me throug
high school and dress me so like the others that I don't loo
different, and if I have very good luck I can save some for colleg
Pete, please go with me?"

"Why don't you go like you always have?"

"Well, the truth is, I had a little scare," said Elnora. "I neve
did mean to go alone; sometimes I sort of wandered inside farthe
than I intended, chasing things. You know Duncan gave m
Freckles's books, and I have been gathering moths like he did
Lately I found I could sell them. If I can make a complete col
lection, I can get three hundred dollars for it. Three such collec
tions would take me almost through college, and I've fou
years in the high school yet. That's a long time. I might collec
them."

"Can every kind there is be found here?"

"No, not all of them, but when I get more than I need of on
kind, I can trade them with collectors farther north and west, s
I can complete sets. It's the only way I see to earn the money

Look what I have already. Big gray Cecropias come from this kind; brown Polyphemus from that, and green Lunas from these. You aren't working on Sunday. Go with me only an hour, Pete!"

The man looked at her narrowly. She was young, wholesome, and beautiful. She was innocent, intensely in earnest, and she needed the money, he knew that.

"You didn't tell me what scared you," he said.

"Oh, I thought I did! Why, you know, I had Freckles's box packed full of moths and specimens, and one evening I sold some to the Bird Woman. Next morning I found a note telling me it wasn't safe to go inside the swamp. That sort of scared me. I think I'll go alone, rather than miss the chance, but I'd be so happy if you would take care of me. Then I could go anywhere I chose, because if I mired you could pull me out. You will take care of me, Pete?"

"Yes, I'll take care of you," promised Pete Corson.

"Goody!" said Elnora. "Let's start quick! And Pete, you look at these closely, and when you are hunting or going along the road, if one dangles under your nose, you cut off the little twig and save it for me, will you?"

"Yes, I'll save you all I see," promised Pete. He pushed back his hat and followed Elnora. She plunged fearlessly among bushes, over underbrush, and across dead logs. One minute she was crying wildly, that here was a big one, the next she was reaching for a limb above her head or on her knees overturning dead leaves under a hickory or oak tree, or working aside black muck with her bare hands as she searched for buried pupæ cases. For the first hour Pete bent back bushes and followed, carrying what Elnora discovered. Then he found one.

"Is this the kind of thing you are looking for?" he asked bashfully, as he presented a wild cherry twig.

"Oh Pete, that's a Promethea! I didn't even hope to find one."

"What's the bird like?" asked Pete.

"Almost black wings," said Elnora, "with clay-colored edges, and the most wonderful wine-colored flush over the under side

if it's a male, and stronger wine above and below if it's a femal Oh, aren't I happy!"

"How would it do to make what you have into a bunch tha we could leave here, and come back for them?"

"That would be all right."

Relieved of his load Pete began work. First, he narrowl examined the cocoons Elnora had found. He questioned her a to what other kinds would be like. He began to use the eyes c a trained woodman and hunter in her behalf. He saw several s easily, and moved through the forest so softly, that Elnora forgo the moths in watching him. Presently she was carrying the spec mens, and he was making the trips of investigation to see whic was a cocoon and which a curled leaf, or he was on his knee digging around stumps. As he worked he kept asking question What kind of logs were best to look beside, what trees wer pupæ cases most likely to be under; on what bushes did cater pillars spin most frequently? Time passed, as it always does whe one's occupation is absorbing.

When the Sintons took Mrs. Comstock home, they stoppe to see Elnora. She was not there. Mrs. Comstock called at th edge of her woods and received no reply. Then Wesley turne and drove back to the Limberlost. He left Margaret and Mr Comstock holding the team and entertaining Billy, while h entered the swamp.

Elnora and Pete had made a wide trail behind them. Befor Sinton had thought of calling, he heard voices and approache with some caution. Soon he saw Elnora, her flushed face beamin as she bent with an armload of twigs and branches and talke to a kneeling man.

"Now go cautiously!" she was saying. "I am just sure w will find an Imperialis here. It's their very kind of a place There! What did I tell you! Isn't that splendid? Oh, I am s glad you came with me!"

Wesley stood staring in speechless astonishment, for the ma had arisen, brushed the dirt from his hands, and held out t Elnora a small shining dark pupa case. As his face came int

iew Sinton almost cried out, for he was the one man of all thers Wesley knew with whom he most feared for Elnora's afety. She had him on his knees digging pupæ cases for her from ne swamp.

"Elnora!" called Sinton. "Elnora!"

"Oh, Uncle Wesley!" cried the girl. "See what luck we've ad! I know we have a dozen and a half cocoons and we have nree pupæ cases. It's much harder to get the cases because you ave to dig for them, and you can't see where to look. But Pete fine at it! He's found three, and he says he will keep watch eside the roads, and through the woods while he hunts. Isn't nat splendid of him? Uncle Wesley, there is a college over there n the western edge of the swamp. Look closely, and you can ee the great dome up among the clouds."

"I should say you have had luck," said Wesley, striving to make is voice natural. "But I thought you were not coming to the wamp?"

"Well, I wasn't," said Elnora, "but I couldn't find many anyvhere else, honest, I couldn't, and just as soon as I came to the dge I began to see them here. I kept my promise. I didn't come n alone. Pete came with me. He's so strong, he isn't afraid of nything, and he's perfectly splendid to locate cocoons! He's ound half of these. Come on, Pete, it's getting dark now, and ve must go."

They started toward the trail, Pete carrying the cocoons. He eft them at the case, while Elnora and Wesley went on to the arriage together.

"Elnora Comstock, what does this mean?" demanded her nother.

"It's all right, one of the neighbors was with her, and she ot several dollars' worth of stuff," interposed Wesley.

"You oughter seen my pa," shouted Billy. "He was ist all vhited out, and he laid as still as anything. They put him away leep in the ground."

"Billy!" breathed Margaret in a prolonged groan.

"Jimmy and Belle are going to be together in a nice place.

They are coming to see me, and Snap is right down here by th wheel. Here, Snap! My, but he'll be tickled to get somethin to eat! He's 'most twisted as me. They get new clothes, an all they want to eat, too, but they'll miss me. They couldn have got along without me. I took care of them. I had a lot o things give to me 'cause I was the littlest, and I always divide with them. But they won't need me now."

When she left the carriage Mrs. Comstock gravely shook hand with Billy. "Remember," she said to him, "I love boys, and love dogs. Whenever you don't have a good time up there, tak your dog and come right down and be my little boy. We will ju have loads of fun. You should hear the whistles I can make. I you aren't treated right you come straight to me."

Billy wagged his head sagely. "You ist bet I will!" he said.

"Mother, how could you?" asked Elnora as they walked up th path.

"How could I, missy? You better ask how couldn't I? I ju couldn't! Not for enough to pay my road tax! Not for enough t pay the road tax, and the dredge tax, too!"

"Aunt Margaret always has been lovely to me, and I don think it's fair to worry her."

"I choose to be lovely to Billy, and let her sweat out her ow worries just as she has me, these sixteen years. There is nothin in all this world so good for people as taking a dose of the own medicine. The difference is that I am honest. I just say i plain English, 'if they don't treat you right, come to me.' The have only said it in actions and inferences. I want to teach Ma Sinton how her own doses taste, but she begins to sputter befo I fairly get the spoon to her lips. Just you wait!"

"When I think what I owe her——" began Elnora.

"Well, thank goodness, I don't owe her anything, and so I' perfectly free to do what I choose. Come on, and help me g supper. I'm hungry as Billy!"

Margaret Sinton rocked slowly back and forth in her chai On her breast lay Billy's red head, one hand clutched her dre

ont with a spasmodic grip, even after he was unconscious.
"You mustn't begin that, Margaret," said Sinton. "He's too
avy. And it's bad for him. He's better off to lie down and go
sleep alone."
"He's very light, Wesley. He jumps and quivers so. He has to
stronger than he is now, before he will sleep soundly."

CHAPTER IX

Wherein Elnora Discovers a Violin, and Billy Disciplines Margaret

Elnora missed the little figure at the bridge the following mor ing. She slowly walked up the street and turned in at the wi entrance to the school grounds. She scarcely could compreher that only a week ago she had gone there friendless, alone, a so sick at heart that she was physically ill. Today she h decent clothing, books, friends, and her mind was at ease to wo on her studies.

As she approached home that night the girl paused in amaz ment. Her mother had company, and she was laughing. Elno entered the kitchen softly and peeped into the sitting-room. M Comstock sat in her chair holding a book and every few secon a soft chuckle broke into a real laugh. Mark Twain was doi his work; while Mrs. Comstock was not lacking in a sense humor. Elnora entered the room before her mother saw h Mrs. Comstock looked up with flushed face.

"Where did you get this?" she demanded.

"I bought it," said Elnora.

"Bought it! With all the taxes due!"

"I paid for it out of my Indian money, mother," said Elno "I couldn't bear to spend so much on myself and nothing at on you. I was afraid to buy the dress I should have liked to, a I thought the book would be company, while I was gone. I have read it, but I do hope it's good."

"Good! It's the biggest piece of foolishness I have read in

life. I've laughed all day, ever since I found it. I had a tion to go out and read some of it to the cows and see if they uldn't laugh."

"If it made you laugh, it's a wise book," said Elnora.

"Wise!" cried Mrs. Comstock. "You can stake your life it's a se book. It takes the smartest man there is to do this kind fooling," and she began laughing again.

Elnora, highly satisfied with her purchase, went to her room d put on her working clothes. Thereafter she made a point bringing a book that she thought would interest her mother, m the library every week, and leaving it on the sitting-room le. Each night she carried home at least two school books d studied until she had mastered the points of her lessons. e did her share of the work faithfully, and every available nute she was in the fields searching for cocoons, for the moths omised to become her largest source of income.

She gathered baskets of nests, flowers, mosses, insects, and all ts of natural history specimens and sold them to the grade achers. At first she tried to tell these instructors what to teach eir pupils about the specimens; but recognizing how much re she knew than they, one after another begged her to study home, and use her spare hours in school to exhibit and explain ture subjects to their pupils. Elnora loved the work, and she eded the money, for every few days some matter of expense se that she had not expected.

From the first week she had been received and invited with e crowd of girls in her class, and it was their custom in passing rough the business part of the city to stop at the confectioners' d take turns in treating to expensive candies, ice cream sodas, t chocolate, or whatever they fancied. When first Elnora was ked she accepted without understanding. The second time she nt because she seldom had tasted these things, and they were delicious she could not resist. After that she went because she ew all about it, and had decided to go.

She had spent half an hour on the log beside the trail in deep ought and had arrived at her conclusions. She worked harder an usual for the next week, but she seemed to thrive on work.

It was October and the red leaves were falling when her fir time came to treat. As the crowd flocked down the broad wal that night Elnora called, "Girls, it's my treat tonight! Come on!

She led the way through the city to the grocery they patronize when they had a small spread, and entering came out with basket, which she carried to the bridge on her home road. Ther she arranged the girls in two rows on the cement abutments an opening her basket she gravely offered each girl an exquisit little basket of bark, lined with red leaves, in one end of whic nestled a juicy big red apple and in the other a spicy doughnu not an hour from Margaret Sinton's frying basket.

Another time she offered big balls of popped corn stuc together with maple sugar, and liberally sprinkled with beech nut kernels. Again it was hickory nut kernels glazed with suga another time maple candy, and once a basket of warm pumpki pies. She never made any apology, or offered any excuse. Sh simply gave what she could afford, and the change was as we come to those city girls, accustomed to sodas and Frenc candy, as were these same things to Elnora surfeited on popcor and pie. In her room was a little slip containing a record of th number of weeks in the school year, the times it would be he turn to treat and the dates on which such occasions would fal with a number of suggestions beside each. Once the girls a most fought over a basket lined with yellow leaves, and filled wit fat, very ripe red haws. In late October there was a riot over or which was lined with red leaves and contained big fragra pawpaws frost-bitten to a perfect degree. Then hazel nuts we ripe, and once they served. One day Elnora at her wits' en explained to her mother that the girls had given her things an she wanted to treat them. Mrs. Comstock, with characterist stubbornness, had said she would leave a basket at the groce for her, but firmly declined to say what would be in it. All da Elnora struggled to keep her mind on her books. For hours sh wavered in tense uncertainty. What would her mother do? Shou she take the girls to the confectioner's that night or risk the baske Mrs. Comstock could make delicious things to eat, but wou she?

As they left the building Elnora made a final rapid mental culation. She could not see her way clear to a decent treat for people for less than two dollars and if the basket proved to nice, then the money would be wasted. She decided to risk As they went to the bridge the girls were betting on what treat would be, and crowding near Elnora like spoiled small ldren. Elnora set down the basket.

"Girls," she said, "I don't know what this is myself, so all of are going to be surprised. Here goes!"

She lifted the cover and perfumes from the land of spices rolled . In one end of the basket lay ten enormous sugar cakes the s of which had been liberally dotted with circles cut from k candy. The candy had melted in baking and made small nsparent wells of waxy sweetness and in the center of each ke was a fat turtle made from a raisin with cloves for head d feet. The remainder of the basket was filled with big spiced ars that could be held by their stems while they were eaten. e girls shrieked and attacked the cookies, and of all the treats nora offered perhaps none was quite so long remembered that.

When Elnora took her basket, placed her books in it, and rted home, all the girls went with her as far as the fence where crossed the field to the swamp. At parting they kissed her od-bye. Elnora was a happy girl as she hurried home to thank r mother. She was happy over her books that night, and happy the way to school the following morning.

When the music swelled from the orchestra her heart almost oke with throbbing joy. For music always had affected her angely, and since she had been comfortable enough in her roundings to notice things, she had listened to every note to d what it was that literally hurt her heart, and at last she ew. It was the talking of the violins. They were human voices, d they spoke a language Elnora understood. It seemed to her at she must climb up on the stage, take the instruments from fingers of the players and make them speak what was in her art.

That night she said to her mother, "I am perfectly crazy

for a violin. I am sure I could play one, sure as I live. Did a one——" Elnora never completed that sentence.

"Hush!" thundered Mrs. Comstock. "Be quiet! Never ment those things before me again—never as long as you live! I loa them! They are a snare of the very devil himself! They w made to lure men and women from their homes and their hon If ever I see you with one in your fingers I will smash it in piece

Naturally Elnora hushed, but she thought of nothing else af she had finished her lessons. At last there came a day when some reason the leader of the orchestra left his violin on grand piano. That morning Elnora made her first mistake algebra. At noon, as soon as the building was empty, she slipp into the auditorium, found the side door which led to the sta and going through the musicians' entrance she took the viol She carried it back into the little side room where the orches assembled, closed all the doors, opened the case and lifted the instrument.

She laid it on her breast, dropped her chin on it and dr the bow softly across the strings. One after another she test the open notes. Gradually her stroke ceased to tremble and s drew the bow firmly. Then her fingers began to fall and soft slowly she searched up and down those strings for sounds s knew. Standing in the middle of the floor, she tried over and ov It seemed scarcely a minute before the hall was filled with t sound of hurrying feet, and she was forced to put away the vio and go to her classes. The next day she prayed that the vio would be left again, but her petition was not answered. Th night when she returned from the school she made an excuse go down to see Billy. He was engaged in hulling walnuts driving them through holes in a board. His hands were protect by a pair of Margaret's old gloves, but he had speckled his fa generously. He appeared well, and greeted Elnora hilarious

"Me an' the squirrels are laying up our winter stores," shouted. "Cos the cold is coming, an' the snow an' if we ha any nuts we have to fix 'em now. But I'm ahead, cos Un Wesley made me this board, and I can hull a big pile while t old squirrel does only ist one with his teeth."

Elnora picked him up and kissed him. "Billy, are you happy?" e asked.

"Yes, and so's Snap," answered Billy. "You ought to see him ake the dirt fly when he gets after a chipmunk. I bet you he uld dig up pa, if anybody wanted him to."

"Billy!" gasped Margaret as she came out to them.

"Well, me and Snap don't want him up, and I bet you Jimmy id Belle don't, either. I ain't been twisty inside once since I been ere, and I don't want to go away, and Snap don't, either. He ld me so."

"Billy! That is not true. Dogs can't talk," cautioned Margaret.

"Then what makes you open the door when he asks you to?" emanded Billy.

"Scratching and whining isn't talking."

"Anyway, it's the best Snap can talk, and you get up and do ings he wants done. Chipmunks can talk too. You ought to ear them damn things holler when Snap gets them!"

"Billy! When you want a cooky for supper and I don't give to you it is because you said a wrong word."

"Well, for——" Billy clapped his hand over his mouth and ained his face in swipes. "Well, for—anything! Did I go an' rget again! The cookies will get all hard, won't they? I bet ou ten dollars I don't say that any more."

He espied Wesley and ran to show him a walnut too big to o through the holes, and Elnora and Margaret entered the ouse.

They talked of many things for a time and then Elnora said ddenly: "Aunt Margaret, I like music."

"I've noticed that in you all your life," answered Margaret.

"If dogs can't talk, I can make a violin talk," announced lnora, and then in amazement watched the face of Margaret inton grow pale.

"A violin!" she wavered. "Where did you get a violin?"

"They fairly seemed to speak to me in the orchestra. One day he conductor left his in the auditorium, and I took it, and Aunt Margaret, I can make it do the wind in the swamp, the birds, and he animals. I can make any sound I ever heard on it. If I had a

chance to practice a little, I could make it do the orchestra music too. I don't know how I know, but I do."

"Did—did you ever mention it to your mother?" faltered Margaret.

"Yes, and she seems prejudiced against them. But oh, Aunt Margaret, I never felt so about anything, not even going to school. I just feel as if I'd die if I didn't have one. I could keep it at school, and practice at noon a whole hour. Soon they'd ask me to play in the orchestra. I could keep it in the case and practice in the woods in summer. You'd let me play over here Sunday. Oh, Aunt Margaret, what does one cost? Would it be wicked for me to take some of my money and buy a very cheap one? I could play on the least expensive one made."

"Oh, no you couldn't! A cheap machine makes cheap music. You got to have a fine fiddle to make it sing. But there's no sense in your buying one. There isn't a decent reason on earth why you shouldn't have your fa——"

"My father's!" cried Elnora. She caught Margaret Sinton by the arm. "My father had a violin! He played it. That's why I can! Where is it! Is it in our house? Is it in mother's room?"

"Elnora!" panted Margaret. "Your mother will kill me! She always hated it."

"Mother dearly loves music," said Elnora.

"Not when it took the man she loved away from her to make it!"

"Where is my father's violin?"

"Elnora!"

"I've never seen a picture of my father. I've never heard his name mentioned. I've never had a scrap that belonged to him. Was he my father, or am I a charity child like Billy, and so she hates me?"

"She has good pictures of him. Seems she just can't bear to hear him talked about. Of course he was your father. They lived right there when you were born. She doesn't dislike you; she merely tries to make herself think she does. There's no sense in the world in you not having his violin. I've a great notion——"

"Has mother got it?"

"No. I've never heard her mention it. It was not at home when —when he died."

"Do you know where it is?"

"Yes. I'm the only person on earth who does, except the one ho has it."

"Who is that?"

"I can't tell you, but I will see if they have it yet, and get it I can. But if your mother finds it out she will never forgive e."

"I can't help it," said Elnora. "I want that violin."

"I'll go tomorrow, and see if it has been destroyed."

"Destroyed! Oh, Aunt Margaret! Would anyone dare?"

"I hardly think so. It was a good instrument. He played it like master."

"Tell me!" breathed Elnora.

"His hair was red and curled more than yours, and his eyes ere blue. He was tall, slim, and the very imp of mischief. He ked and teased all day until he picked up that violin. Then his ead bent over it, and his eyes got big and earnest. He seemed listen as if he first heard the notes, and then copied them. ometimes he drew the bow trembly, like he wasn't sure it was ght, and he might have to try again. He could almost drive you razy when he wanted to, and no man that ever lived could ake you dance as he could. He made it all up as he went. Ie seemed to listen for his dancing music, too. It appeared to ome to him; he'd begin to play and you had to keep time. You ouldn't be still; he loved to sweep a crowd around with that ow of his. I think it was the thing you call inspiration. I can e him now, his handsome head bent, his cheeks red, his eyes apping, and that bow going across the strings, and driving us ke sheep. He always kept his body swinging, and he loved to lay. He often slighted his work shamefully, and sometimes her little; that is why she hated it—Elnora, what are you making ie do?"

The tears were rolling down Elnora's cheeks. "Oh, Aunt Margaret," she sobbed. "Why haven't you told me about him ooner? I feel as if you had given my father to me living, so that

I could touch him. I can see him, too! Why didn't you ever te me before? Go on! Go on!"

"I can't, Elnora! I'm scared silly. I never meant to say an thing. If I hadn't promised her not to talk of him to you sh wouldn't have let you come here. She made me swear it."

"But why? Why? Was he a shame? Was he disgraced?"

"Maybe it was that unjust feeling that took possession of h when she couldn't help him from the swamp. She had to blam someone, or go crazy, so she took it out on you. At times, tho first ten years, if I had talked to you, and you had repeate anything to her, she might have struck you too hard. She was n master of herself. You must be patient with her, Elnora. God onl knows what she has gone through, but I think she is a little bett lately."

"So do I," said Elnora. "She seems more interested in m clothes, and she fixes me such delicious lunches that the gir bring fine candies and cake and beg to trade. I gave half m lunch for a box of candy one day, brought it home to her, an told her. Since, she has wanted me to carry a market bask and treat the crowd every day, she was so pleased. Life has bee too monotonous for her. I think she enjoys even the little chang made by my going and coming. She sits up half the night to rea the library books I bring, but she is so stubborn she won't eve admit that she touches them. Tell me more about my father.

"Wait until I see if I can find the violin."

So Elnora went home in suspense, and that night she added t her prayers: "Dear Lord, be merciful to my father, and oh, d help Aunt Margaret to get his violin."

Wesley and Billy came in to supper tired and hungry. Billy at heartily, but his eyes often rested on a plate of tempting cookie and when Wesley offered them to the boy he reached for on Margaret was compelled to explain that cookies were forbidde that night.

"What!" said Wesley. "Wrong words been coming again. Oh Billy, I do wish you could remember! I can't sit and eat cookie before a little boy who has none. I'll have to put mine back, too. Billy's face twisted in despair.

"Aw, go on!" he said gruffly, but his chin was jumping, for Wesley was his idol.

"Can't do it," said Wesley. "It would choke me."

Billy turned to Margaret. "You make him," he appealed.

"He can't, Billy," said Margaret. "I know how he feels. You see, I can't myself."

Then Billy slid from his chair, ran to the couch, buried his face in the pillow and cried heartbrokenly. Wesley hurried to the barn, and Margaret to the kitchen. When the dishes were washed Billy slipped from the back door.

Wesley piling hay into the mangers heard a sound behind him and inquired, "That you, Billy?"

"Yes," answered Billy, "and it's all so dark you can't see me now, isn't it?"

"Well, mighty near," answered Wesley.

"Then you stoop down and open your mouth."

Sinton had shared bites of apple and nuts for weeks, for Billy had not learned how to eat anything without dividing with Jimmy and Belle. Since he had been separated from them, he shared with Wesley and Margaret. So he bent over the boy and received an installment of cooky that almost choked him.

"Now you can eat it!" shouted Billy in delight. "It's all dark! I can't see what you're doing at all!"

Wesley picked up the small figure and set the boy on the back of a horse to bring his face level so that they could talk as men. He never towered from his height above Billy, but always lifted the little soul when important matters were to be discussed.

"Now what a dandy scheme," he commented. "Did you and Aunt Margaret fix it up?"

"No. She ain't had hers yet. But I got one for her. Ist as soon as you eat yours, I am going to take hers, and feed her first time I find her in the dark."

"But Billy, where did you get the cookies? You know Aunt Margaret said you were not to have any."

"I ist took them," said Billy, "I didn't take them for me. I ist took them for you and her."

Wesley thought fast. In the warm darkness of the barn the

horses crunched their corn, a rat gnawed at a corner of the granary, and among the rafters the white pigeon cooed a soft sleepy note to his dusky mate.

"Did—did—I steal?" wavered Billy.

Wesley's big hands closed until he almost hurt the boy.

"No!" he said vehemently. "That is too big a word. You made a mistake. You were trying to be a fine little man, but you went at it the wrong way. You only made a mistake. All of us do that, Billy. The world grows that way. When we make mistakes we can see them; that teaches us to be more careful the next time and so we learn."

"How wouldn't it be a mistake?"

"If you had told Aunt Margaret what you wanted to do, and asked her for the cookies she would have given them to you."

"But I was 'fraid she wouldn't, and you ist had to have it."

"Not if it was wrong for me to have it, Billy. I don't want it that much."

"Must I take it back?"

"You think hard, and decide yourself."

"Lift me down," said Billy, after a silence. "I got to put this in the jar, and tell her."

Wesley set the boy on the floor, but as he did so he paused one second and strained him close to his breast.

Margaret sat in her chair sewing; Billy slipped in and crept beside her. The little face was lined with tragedy.

"Why Billy, whatever is the matter?" she cried as she dropped her sewing and held out her arms. Billy stood back. He gripped his little fists tight and squared his shoulders. "I got to be shut up in the closet," he said.

"Oh, Billy! What an unlucky day! What have you done now?"

"I stold!" gulped Billy. "He said it was ist a mistake, but it was worser 'an that. I took something you told me I wasn't to have."

"Stole!" Margaret was in despair. "What, Billy?"

"Cookies!" answered Billy in equal trouble.

"Billy!" wailed Margaret. "How could you?"

"It was for him and you," sobbed Billy. "He said he couldn't eat it 'fore me, but out in the barn it's all dark and I couldn't see

thought maybe he could there. Then we might put out the light nd you could have yours. He said I only made it worse, cos I nustn't take things, so I got to go in the closet. Will you hold ne tight a little bit first? He did."

Margaret opened her arms and Billy rushed in and clung to er a few seconds, with all the force of his being, then he slipped o the floor and marched to the closet. Margaret opened the door. Billy gave one glance at the light, clinched his fists and walking nside climbed on a box. Margaret closed the door.

Then she sat and listened. Was the air pure enough? Possibly e might smother. She had read something once. Was it very ark? What if there should be a mouse in the closet and it should un across his foot and frighten him into spasms. Somewhere she ad heard—— Margaret leaned forward with tense face and stened. Something dreadful might happen. She could bear it no onger. She arose hurriedly and opened the door. Billy was drawn p on the box in a little heap, and he lifted a disapproving face o her.

"Shut that door!" he said. "I ain't been in here near long nough yet!"

CHAPTER X

Wherein Elnora Has More Financial Troubles, and Mrs. Comstock Again Hears the Song of the Limberlost

THE following night Elnora hurried to Sintons'. She threw open the back door and with anxious eyes searched Margaret's face.

"You got it!" panted Elnora. "You got it! I can see by your face that you did. Oh, give it to me!"

"Yes, I got it, honey, I got it all right, but don't be so fast. It had been kept in such a damp place it needed glueing, it had to have strings, and a key was gone. I knew how much you wanted it, so I sent Wesley right to town with it. They said they could fix it good as new, but it should be varnished, and that it would take several days for the glue to set. You can have it Saturday."

"You found it where you thought it was? You know it's his?"

"Yes, it was just where I thought, and it's the same violin I've seen him play hundreds of times. It's all right, only laying so long it needs fixing."

"Oh, Aunt Margaret! Can I ever wait?"

"It does seem a long time, but how could I help it? You couldn't do anything with it as it was. You see, it had been hidden away in a garret, and it needed cleaning and drying to make it fit to play again. You can have it Saturday sure. But Elnora, you've got to promise me that you will leave it here, or in town, and not let your mother get a hint of it. I don't know what she'd do."

"Uncle Wesley can bring it here until Monday. Then I will ke it to school so that I can practice at noon. Oh, I don't know ow to thank you. And there's more than the violin for which to thankful. You've given me my father. Last night I saw him ainly as life."

"Elnora, you were dreaming!"

"I know I was dreaming, but I saw him. I saw him so closely at a tiny white scar at the corner of his eyebrow showed. I was st reaching out to touch him when he disappeared."

"Who told you there was a scar on his forehead?"

"No one ever did in all my life. I saw it last night as he went own. And oh, Aunt Margaret! I saw what she did, and I heard is cries! No matter what she does, I don't believe I ever can be ngry with her again. Her heart is broken, and she can't help it. h, it was terrible, but I am glad I saw it. Now, I will always un-erstand."

"I don't know what to make of that," said Margaret. "I don't elieve in such stuff at all, but you couldn't make it up, for you idn't know."

"I only know that I played the violin last night, as he played , and while I played he came through the woods from the di-ection of Carneys'. It was summer and all the flowers were in loom. He wore gray trousers and a blue shirt, his head was bare, nd his face was beautiful. I could almost touch him when he ank."

Margaret stood perplexed. "I don't know what to think of hat!" she ejaculated. "I was next to the last person who saw im before he was drowned. It was late on a June afternoon, and e was dressed as you describe. He was bareheaded because he ad found a quail's nest before the bird began to brood, and he athered the eggs in his hat and left it in a fence corner to get on is way home; they found it afterward."

"Was he coming from Carneys'?"

"He was on that side of the quagmire. Why he ever skirted it o close as to get caught is a mystery you will have to dream out. never could understand it."

"Was he doing something he didn't want my mother to know?"

"Why?"

"Because if he had been, he might have cut close the swam so he couldn't be seen from the garden. You know, the whole pat straight to the pool where he sank can be seen from our bac door. It's firm on our side. The danger is on the north and east. I he didn't want mother to know, he might have tried to pass o either of those sides and gone too close. Was he in a hurry?"

"Yes, he was," said Margaret. "He had been away longer tha he expected, and he almost ran when he started home."

"And he'd left his violin somewhere that you knew, and yo went and got it. I'll wager he was going to play, and didn't wan mother to find it out!"

"It wouldn't make any difference to you if you knew ever little thing, so quit thinking about it, and just be glad you are t have what he loved best of anything."

"That's true. Now I must hurry home. I am dreadfull late."

Elnora sprang up and ran down the road, but when she ap proached the cabin she climbed the fence, crossed the open wood pasture diagonally and entered at the back garden gate. As sh often came that way when she had been looking for cocoons he mother asked no questions.

Elnora lived by the minute until Saturday, when, contrary t his usual custom, Wesley went to town in the forenoon, takin her along to buy some groceries. Wesley drove straight to th music store, and asked for the violin he had left to be mended

In its new coat of varnish, with new keys and strings, it seeme much like any other violin to Sinton, but to Elnora it was th most beautiful instrument ever made, and a priceless treasure She held it in her arms, touched the strings softly and then sh drew the bow across them in whispering measure. She had n time to think what a remarkably good bow it was for sixteen years' disuse. The tan leather case might have impressed her a being in fine condition also, had she been in a state to questio anything. She did remember to ask for the bill and she wa gravely presented with a slip calling for four strings, one key, an a coat of varnish, total, one dollar fifty. It seemed to Elnora sh

ever could put the precious instrument in the case and start ome. Wesley left her in the music store where the proprietor owed her all he could about tuning, and gave her several beginners' sheets of notes and scales. She carried the violin in her ms as far as the crossroads at the corner of their land, then reluctantly put it under the carriage seat.

As soon as her work was done she ran down to Sintons' and egan to play, and on Monday the violin went to school with er. She made arrangements with the superintendent to leave it his office and scarcely took time for her food at noon, she was o eager to practice. Often one of the girls asked her to stay in wn all night for some lecture or entertainment. She could take e violin with her, practice, and secure help. Her skill was so eat that the leader of the orchestra offered to give her lessons if e would play to pay for them, so her progress was rapid in technical work. But from the first day the instrument became hers, ith perfect faith that she could play as her father did, she spent lf her practice time in imitating the sounds of all outdoors and nprovising the songs her happy heart sang in those days.

So the first year went, and the second and third were a repetion; but the fourth was different, for that was the close of the ourse, ending with graduation and all its attendant ceremonies nd expenses. To Elnora these appeared mountain high. She had oarded every cent, thinking twice before she parted with a enny, but teaching natural history in the grades had taken time om her studies in school which must be made up outside. She as a conscientious student, ranking first in most of her classes, nd standing high in all branches. Her interest in her violin had rown with the years. She went to school early and practiced half n hour in the little room adjoining the stage, while the orchesa gathered. She put in a full hour at noon, and remained anher half hour at night. She carried the violin to Sintons' on aturday and practiced all the time she could there, while Maaret watched the road to see that Mrs. Comstock was not comg. She had become so skillful that it was a delight to hear her ay music of any composer, but when she played her own, that as joy inexpressible, for then the wind blew, the water rippled,

the Limberlost sang her songs of sunshine, shadow, black storm and white night.

Since her dream Elnora had regarded her mother with pe culiar tenderness. The girl realized, in a measure, what had hap pened. She avoided anything that possibly could stir bitter memo ries or draw deeper a line on the hard, white face. This cost man sacrifices, much work, and sometimes delayed progress, but th horror of that awful dream remained with Elnora. She worke her way cheerfully, doing all she could to interest her mother i things that happened in school, in the city, and by carrying book that were entertaining from the public library.

Three years had changed Elnora from the girl of sixteen t the very verge of womanhood. She had grown tall, round, an her face had the loveliness of perfect complexion, beautiful eye and hair and an added touch from within that might have bee called comprehension. It was a compound of self-reliance, har knocks, heart hunger, unceasing work, and generosity. There wa no form of suffering with which the girl could not sympathize no work she was afraid to attempt, no subject she had investi gated she did not understand. These things combined to pro duce a breadth and depth of character altogether unusual. Sh was so absorbed in her classes and her music that she had no been able to gather many specimens. When she realized this an hunted assiduously, she soon found that changing natural con ditions had affected such work. Men all around were clearin available land. The trees fell wherever corn would grow. Th swamp was broken by several gravel roads, dotted in place around the edge with little frame houses, and the machinery o oil wells; one especially low place around the region of Freckles room was nearly all that remained of the original. Wherever th trees fell the moisture dried, the creeks ceased to flow, the rive ran low, and at times the bed was dry. With unbroken sweep th winds of the west came, gathering force with every mile an howled and raved; threatening to tear the shingles from the roo blowing the surface from the soil in clouds of fine dust and rap idly changing everything. From coming in with two or thre dozen rare moths in a day, in three years' time Elnora ha

wn to be delighted with finding two or three. Big pursy cater-
ars could not be picked from their favorite bushes, when there
re no bushes. Dragonflies would not hover over dry places, and
terflies became scarce in proportion to the flowers, while no
d yields over three crops of Indian relics.

All the time the expense of books, clothing and incidentals
d continued. Elnora added to her bank account whenever she
ld, and drew out when she was compelled, but she omitted
important feature of calling for a balance. So, one early spring
rning in the last quarter of the fourth year, she almost fainted
en she learned that her funds were gone. Commencement with
extra expense was coming, she had no money, and very few
coons to open in June, which would be too late. She had one
lection for the Bird Woman complete to a pair of Imperialis
ths, and that was her only asset. On the day she added these
Yellow Emperors she had been promised a check for three
ndred dollars, but she would not get it until these specimens
re secured. She remembered that she never had found an
nperor before June.

Moreover, that sum was for her first year in college. Then she
uld be of age, and she meant to sell enough of her share of
r father's land to finish. She knew her mother would oppose
r bitterly in that, for Mrs. Comstock had clung to every acre
d tree that belonged to her husband. Her land was almost com-
ete forest where her neighbors owned cleared farms, dotted
th wells that every hour sucked oil from beneath her holdings,
t she was too absorbed in the grief she nursed to know or care.
he Brushwood road and the redredging of the big Limberlost
ch had been more than she could pay from her income, and
e had trembled before the wicket as she asked the banker if
e had funds to pay it, and wondered why he laughed when he
sured her she had. For Mrs. Comstock had spent no time on
mpounding interest, and never added the sums she had been
positing through nearly twenty years. Now she thought her
nds were almost gone, and every day she worried over expenses.
he could see no reason in going through the forms of gradua-
on when pupils had all in their heads that was required to

graduate. Elnora knew she had to have her diploma in order
enter the college she wanted to attend, but she did not dare ut
the word, until high school was finished, for, instead of softeni
as she hoped her mother had begun to do, she seemed to
main very much the same.

When the girl reached the swamp she sat on a log and thoug
over the expense she was compelled to meet. Every member
her particular set was having a large photograph taken to
change with the others. Elnora loved these girls and boys, and
say she could not have their pictures to keep was more than s
could endure. Each one would give to all the others a handso
graduation present. She knew they would prepare gifts for h
whether she could make a present in return or not. Then it w
the custom for each graduating class to give a great entertai
ment and use the funds to present the school with a statue
the entrance hall. Elnora had been cast for and was practicing
part in that performance. She was expected to furnish her dr
and personal necessities. She had been told that she must have
green gauze dress, and where was it to come from?

Every girl of the class would have three beautiful new froc
for Commencement: one for the baccalaureate sermon, anothe
which could be plain, for graduation exercises, and a handso
one for the banquet and ball. Elnora faced the past three yea
and wondered how she could have spent so much money and n
kept account of it. She did not realize where it had gone. She d
not know what she could do now. She thought over the phot
graphs, and at last settled that question to her satisfaction. S
studied longer over the gifts, ten handsome ones there must b
and at last decided she could arrange for them. The green dre
came first. The lights would be dim in the scene, and the settin
deep woods. She could manage that. She simply could not ha
three dresses. She would have to get a very simple one for t
sermon and do the best she could for graduation. Whatever sh
got for that must be made with a guimpe that could be take
out to make it a little more festive for the ball. But where cou
she get even two pretty dresses?

The only hope she could see was to break into the collection

man from India, sell some moths, and try to replace them in
ne. But in her soul she knew that never would do. No June ever
ought just the things she hoped it would. If she spent the col-
e money she knew she could not replace it. If she did not, the
y way was to secure a room in the grades and teach a year.
r work there had been so appreciated that Elnora felt with the
ommendation she knew she could get from the superintend-
and teachers she could secure a position. She was sure she
ld pass the examinations easily. She had once gone on Satur-
, taken them and secured a license for a year before she left
Brushwood school.

She wanted to start to college when the other girls were going.
she could make the first year alone, she could manage the re-
inder. But make that first year herself, she must. Instead of
ing any of her collection, she must hunt as she never before
d hunted and find a Yellow Emperor. She had to have it, that
s all. Also, she had to have those dresses. She thought of Wes-
and dismissed it. She thought of the Bird Woman, and knew
could not tell her. She thought of every way in which she
r had hoped to earn money and realized that with the play,
mmittee meetings, practicing, and final examinations she
rcely had time to live, much less to do more than the work re-
ired for her pictures and gifts. Again Elnora was in trouble,
d this time it seemed the worst of all.

It was dark when she arose and went home.

"Mother," she said, "I have a piece of news that is decidedly
t cheerful."

"Then keep it to yourself!" said Mrs. Comstock. "I think I
ve enough to bear without a great girl like you piling trouble
me."

"My money is all gone!" said Elnora.

"Well, did you think it would last forever? It's been a marvel
me that it's held out as well as it has, the way you've dressed
d gone."

"I don't think I've spent any that I was not compelled to,"
d Elnora. "I've dressed on just as little as I possibly could to
ep going. I am heartsick. I thought I had over fifty dollars

to put me through Commencement, but they tell me it is gone."

"Fifty dollars! To put you through Commencement! What earth are you proposing to do?"

"The same as the rest of them, in the very cheapest way po ble."

"And what might that be?"

Elnora omitted the photographs, the gifts and the play. S told only of the sermon, graduation exercises, and the ball.

"Well, I wouldn't trouble myself over that," sniffed M Comstock. "If you want to go to a sermon, put on the dr you always use for meeting. If you need white for the exerci wear the new dress you got last spring. As for the ball, the b thing for you to do is to stay a mile away from such folly. In opinion you'd best bring home your books, and quit right nc You can't be fixed like the rest of them, don't be so foolish as run into it. Just stay here and let these last few days go. Y can't learn enough more to be of any account."

"But, mother," gasped Elnora. "You don't understand!"

"Oh, yes, I do!" said Mrs. Comstock. "I understand perfect So long as the money lasted, you held up your head, and w sailing without even explaining how you got it from the stuff y gathered. Goodness knows I couldn't see. But now it's gone, y come whining to me. What have I got? Have you forgot that t ditch and the road completely strapped me? I haven't a money. There's nothing for you to do but get out of it."

"I can't!" said Elnora desperately. "I've gone on too long. would make a break in everything. They wouldn't let me ha my diploma!"

"What's the difference? You've got the stuff in your head wouldn't give a rap for a scrap of paper. That don't mean ar thing!"

"But I've worked four years for it, and I can't enter—I oug to have it to help me get a school, when I want to teach. If don't have my grades to show, people will think I quit becau I couldn't pass my examinations. I must have my diploma!"

"Then get it!" said Mrs. Comstock.

'The only way is to graduate with the others."

'Well, graduate if you are bound to!"

'But I can't, unless I have things enough like the class, that on't look as I did that first day."

'Well, please remember I didn't get you into this, and I can't you out. You are set on having your own way. Go on, and e it, and see how you like it!"

Elnora went upstairs and did not come down again that night, ich her mother called pouting.

'I've thought all night," said the girl at breakfast, "and I can't any way but to borrow the money of Uncle Wesley and pay it k from some that the Bird Woman will owe me, when I get more specimen. But that means that I can't go to—that I will e to teach this winter, if I can get a city grade or a country ool."

'Just you dare go dinging after Wesley Sinton for money," ed Mrs. Comstock. "You won't do any such a thing!"

'I can't see any other way. I've got to have the money!"

'Quit, I tell you!"

'I can't quit!—I've gone too far!"

'Well then, let me get your clothes, and you can pay me k."

'But you said you had no money!"

'Maybe I can borrow some at the bank. Then you can return when the Bird Woman pays you."

"All right," said Elnora. "I don't need expensive things. Just ne kind of a pretty cheap white dress for the sermon, and a ite one a little better than I had last summer, for Com- ncement and the ball. I can use the white gloves and shoes got myself for last year, and you can get my dress made at the ne place you did that one. They have my measurements, and perfect work. Don't get expensive things. It will be warm so an go bareheaded."

Then she started to school, but was so tired and discouraged scarcely could walk. Four years' plans going in one day! r she felt that if she did not start to college that fall she never uld. Instead of feeling relieved at her mother's offer, she was

almost too ill to go on. For the thousandth time she groane "Oh, why didn't I keep account of my money?"

After that the days passed so swiftly she scarcely had time think, but several trips her mother made to town, and the assu ance that everything was all right, satisfied Elnora. She work very hard to pass good final examinations and perfect herself f the play. For two days she had remained in town with the Bi Woman, in order to spend more time practicing and at her wo

Often Margaret had asked about her dresses for graduatio and Elnora had replied that they were with a woman in the c who had made her a white dress for last year's Commenceme when she was a junior usher, and they would be all right. Margaret, Wesley, and Billy concerned themselves over wh they would give her for a present. Margaret suggested a beau ful dress. Wesley said that would look to everyone as if s needed dresses. The thing was to get a handsome gift like all t others would have. Billy wanted to present her a five-dollar go piece to buy music for her violin. He was positive Elnora wou like that best of anything.

It was toward the close of the term when they drove to tov one evening to try to settle this important question. They kne Mrs. Comstock had been alone several days, so they asked h to accompany them. She had been more lonely than she wou admit, filled with unusual unrest besides, and so she was glad go. But before they had driven a mile Billy had told that th were going to buy Elnora a graduation present, and Mrs. Con stock devoutly wished that she had remained at home. She w prepared when Billy asked: "Aunt Kate, what are you going give Elnora when she graduates?"

"Plenty to eat, a good bed to sleep in, and do all the work whi she trollops," answered Mrs. Comstock dryly.

Billy reflected. "I guess all of them have that," he said. mean a present you buy at the store, like Christmas?"

"It is only rich folks who buy presents at stores," replied Mr Comstock. "I can't afford it."

"Well, we ain't rich," he said, "but we are going to buy Elno

nething as fine as the rest of them have if we sell a corner of
farm. Uncle Wesley said so."

"A fool and his land are soon parted," said Mrs. Comstock
sely. Wesley and Billy laughed, but Margaret did not enjoy
remark.

While they were searching the stores for something on which
of them could decide, and Margaret was holding Billy to keep
n from saying anything before Mrs. Comstock about the music
which he was determined, Mr. Brownlee met Wesley and
pped to shake hands.

"I see your boy came out finely," he said.

"I don't allow any boy anywhere to be finer than Billy," said
esley.

"I guess you don't allow any girl to surpass Elnora," said Mr.
ownlee. "She comes home with Ellen often, and my wife and I
e her. Ellen says she is great in her part tonight. Best thing in
whole play! Of course, you are in to see it! If you haven't re-
ved seats, you'd better start pretty soon, for the high school
ditorium only seats a thousand. It's always jammed at these
me-talent plays. All of us want to see how our children per-
m."

"Why yes, of course," said the bewildered Wesley. Then he
rried to Margaret. "Say," he said, "there is going to be a play
the high school tonight; and Elnora is in it. Why hasn't she
d us?"

"I don't know," said Margaret, "but I'm going."

"So am I," said Billy.

"Me too!" said Wesley, "unless you think for some reason she
esn't want us. Looks like she would have told us if she had. I'm
ing to ask her mother."

"Yes, that's what she's been staying in town for," said Mrs.
mstock. "It's some sort of a swindle to raise money for her class
buy some silly thing to stick up in the schoolhouse hall to
member them by. I don't know whether it's now or next week,
t there's something of the kind to be done."

"Well, it's tonight," said Wesley, "and we are going. It's my

treat, and we've got to hurry or we won't get in. There are r
served seats, and we have none, so it's the gallery for us, but
don't care so I get to take one good peep at Elnora."

"S'pose she plays?" whispered Margaret in his ear.

"Aw, tush! She couldn't!" said Wesley.

"Well, she's been doing it three years in the orchestra, an
working like a slave at it."

"Oh, well that's different. She's in the play tonight. Brownl
told me so. Come on, quick! We'll drive and hitch closest pla
we can find to the building."

Margaret went in the excitement of the moment, but she w
troubled.

When they reached the building Wesley tied the team to
railing and Billy sprang out to help Margaret. Mrs. Comsto
sat still.

"Come on, Kate," said Wesley, reaching his hand.

"I'm not going anywhere," said Mrs. Comstock, settling co
fortably back against the cushions.

All of them begged and pleaded, but it was no use. Not a
inch would Mrs. Comstock budge. The night was warm an
the carriage comfortable, the horses were securely hitched. Sh
did not care to see what idiotic thing a pack of school childre
were doing, she would wait until the Sintons returned. Wesl
told her it might be two hours, and she said she did not care
it were four, so they left her.

"Did you ever see such——?"

"Cookies!" cried Billy.

"Such blamed stubbornness in all your life?" demanded We
ley. "Won't come to see as fine a girl as Elnora in a stage pe
formance. Why, I wouldn't miss it for fifty dollars!"

"I think it's a blessing she didn't," said Margaret placidly. "
begged unusually hard so she wouldn't. I'm scared of my life f
fear Elnora will play."

They found seats near the door where they could see fair
well. Billy stood at the back of the hall and had a good view. B
and by, a great volume of sound welled from the orchestra, b
Elnora was not playing.

"Told you so!" said Sinton. "Got a notion to go out and see Kate won't come now. She can take my seat, and I'll stand ith Billy."

"You sit still!" said Margaret emphatically. "This is not over et."

So Wesley remained in his seat. The play opened and pro-ressed very much as all high school plays have gone for the past fty years. But Elnora did not appear in any of the scenes.

Out in the warm summer night a sour, grim woman nursed an ching heart and tried to justify herself. The effort irritated her ntensely. She felt that she could not afford the things that were eing done. The old fear of losing the land that she and Robert omstock had purchased and started clearing was strong upon er. She was thinking of him, how she needed him, when the rchestra music poured from the open windows near her. Mrs. omstock endured it as long as she could, and then slipped from ne carriage and fled down the street.

She did not know how far she went or how long she stayed, ut everything was still, save an occasional raised voice when ne wandered back. She stood looking at the building. Slowly she ntered the wide gates and followed up the walk. Elnora had een coming here for almost four years. When Mrs. Comstock eached the door she looked inside. The wide hall was lighted ith electricity, and the statuary and the decorations of the walls id not seem like pieces of foolishness. The marble appeared pure, hite, and the big pictures most interesting. She walked the ngth of the hall and slowly read the titles of the statues and the ames of the pupils who had donated them. She speculated on here the piece Elnora's class would buy could be placed to ad-antage.

Then she wondered if they were having a large enough audi-nce to buy marble. She liked it better than the bronze, but it ooked as if it cost more. How white the broad stairway was! lnora had been climbing those stairs for years and never told her ney were marble. Of course, she thought they were wood. Proba-ly the upper hall was even grander than this. She went over to ne fountain, took a drink, climbed to the first landing and

looked around her, and then without thought to the second. There she came opposite the wide-open doors and the entrance to the auditorium packed with people and a crowd standing outside. When they noticed a tall woman with white face and hair and black dress, one by one they stepped a little aside, so that Mrs. Comstock could see the stage. It was covered with curtains, and no one was doing anything. Just as she turned to go a sound so faint that everyone leaned forward and listened, drifted down the auditorium. It was difficult to tell just what it was; after one instant half the audience looked toward the windows, for it seemed only a breath of wind rustling freshly opened leaves; merely a hint of stirring air.

Then the curtains were swept aside swiftly. The stage had been transformed into a lovely little corner of creation, where trees and flowers grew and moss carpeted the earth. A soft wind blew and it was the gray of dawn. Suddenly a robin began to sing, then a song sparrow joined him, and then several orioles began talking at once. The light grew stronger, the dew drops trembled, flower perfume began to creep out to the audience; the air moved the branches gently and a rooster crowed. Then all the scene was shaken with a babel of bird notes in which you could hear a cardinal whistling, and a blue finch piping. Back somewhere among the high branches a dove cooed and then a horse neighed shrilly. That set a blackbird crying, "T'check," and a whole flock answered it. The crows began to caw and a lamb bleated. Then the grosbeaks, chats, and vireos had something to say, and the sun rose higher, the light grew stronger and the breeze rustled the treetops loudly; a cow bawled and the whole barnyard answered. The guineas were clucking, the turkey gobbler strutting, the hens calling, the chickens cheeping, the light streamed down straight overhead and the bees began to hum. The air stirred strongly, and away in an unseen field a reaper clacked and rattled through ripening wheat while the driver whistled. An uneasy mare whickered to her colt, the colt answered, and the light began to decline. Miles away a rooster crowed for twilight, and dusk was coming down. Then a cat-

rd and a brown thrush sang against a grosbeak and a hermit rush. The air was tremulous with heavenly notes, the lights ent out in the hall, dusk swept across the stage, a cricket sang nd a katydid answered, and a wood pewee wrung the heart ith its lonesome cry. Then a night hawk screamed, a whip-poor-ill complained, a belated killdeer swept the sky, and the night ind sang a louder song. A little screech owl tuned up in the stance, a barn owl replied, and a great horned owl drowned oth their voices. The moon shone and the scene was warm with ellow light. The bird voices died and soft exquisite melody be-an to swell and roll. In the center of the stage, piece by piece the rasses, mosses and leaves dropped from an embankment, the liage softly blew away, while plainer and plainer came the out-nes of a lovely girl figure draped in soft clinging green. In her lower of bright hair a few green leaves and white blossoms ung, and they fell over her robe down to her feet. Her white roat and arms were bare, she leaned forward a little and swayed ith the melody, her eyes fast on the clouds above her, her lips arted, a pink tinge of exercise in her cheeks as she drew her ow. She played as only a peculiar chain of circumstances puts in the power of a very few to play. All nature had grown still, e violin sobbed, sang, danced and quavered on alone, no voice particular; the soul of the melody of all nature combined in ne great outpouring.

At the doorway, a white-faced woman endured it as long as e could and then fell senseless. The men nearest carried her own the hall to the fountain, revived her, and then placed her the carriage to which she directed them. The girl played on nd never knew. When she finished, the uproar of applause unded a block down the street, but the half-senseless woman arcely realized what it meant. Then the girl came to the front the stage, bowed, and lifting the violin she played her concep-on of an invitation to dance. Every living soul within sound of er notes strained their nerves to sit still and let only their hearts ance with her. When that began the woman ran toward the ountry. She never stopped until the carriage overtook her half-

way to her cabin. She said she had grown tired of sitting, and walked on ahead. That night she asked Billy to remain with her and sleep on Elnora's bed. Then she pitched headlong upon her own, and suffered agony of soul such as she never before had known. The swamp had sent back the soul of her loved dead and put it into the body of the daughter she resented, and it was almost more than she could endure and live.

CHAPTER XI

Wherein Elnora Graduates, and Freckles and the Angel Send Gifts

HAT was Friday night. Elnora came home Saturday morng and began work. Mrs. Comstock asked no questions, and the rl only told her that the audience had been large enough to ore than pay for the piece of statuary the class had selected for e hall. Then she inquired about her dresses and was told they ould be ready for her. She had been invited to go to the Bird Voman's to prepare for both the sermon and Commencement xercises. Since there was so much practicing to do, it had been ranged that she should remain there from the night of the sermon until after she was graduated. If Mrs. Comstock decided to tend she was to drive in with the Sintons. When Elnora begged er to come she said she cared nothing about such silliness.

It was almost time for Wesley to come to take Elnora to the ty, when fresh from her bath, and dressed to her outer garent, she stood with expectant face before her mother and cried: Now my dress, mother!"

Mrs. Comstock was pale as she replied: "It's on my bed. Help ourself."

Elnora opened the door and stepped into her mother's room ith never a misgiving. Since the night Margaret and Wesley ad brought her clothing, when she first started to school, her other had selected all of her dresses, with Mrs. Sinton's help ade most of them, and Elnora had paid the bills. The white ress of the previous spring was the first made at a dressmaker's.

She had worn that as junior usher at Commencement; but her mother had selected the material, had it made, and it had fitted perfectly and had been suitable in every way. So with her heart at rest on that point, Elnora hurried to the bed to find only her last summer's white dress, freshly washed and ironed. For an instant she stared at it, then she picked up the garment, looked at the bed beneath it, and her gaze slowly swept the room.

It was unfamiliar. Perhaps this was the third time she had been in it since she was a very small child. Her eyes ranged over the beautiful walnut dresser, the tall bureau, the big chest, inside which she never had seen, and the row of masculine attire hanging above it. Somewhere a dainty lawn or mull dress simply must be hanging; but it was not. Elnora dropped on the chest because she felt too weak to stand. In less than two hours she must be in the church, at Onabasha. She could not wear a last year's washed dress. She had nothing else. She leaned against the wall and her father's overcoat brushed her face. She caught the folds and clung to it with all her might.

"Oh, father! Father!" she moaned. "I need you! I don't believe you would have done this!" At last she opened the door.

"I can't find my dress," she said.

"Well, as it's the only one there I shouldn't think it would be much trouble."

"You mean for me to wear an old washed dress tonight?"

"It's a good dress. There isn't a hole in it! There's no reason on earth why you shouldn't wear it."

"Except that I will not," said Elnora. "Didn't you provide any dress for Commencement, either?"

"If you soil that tonight, I've plenty of time to wash it again."

Wesley's voice called from the gate.

"In a minute," answered Elnora.

She ran upstairs and in an incredibly short time came down wearing one of her gingham school dresses. Her face cold and hard, she passed her mother and went into the night. Half an hour later Margaret and Billy stopped for Mrs. Comstock with the carriage. She had determined fully that she would not go before they called. With the sound of their voices a sort of horror of

ing left seized her, so she put on her hat, locked the door and ent out to them.

"How did Elnora look?" inquired Margaret anxiously.

"Like she always does," answered Mrs. Comstock curtly.

"I do hope her dresses are as pretty as the others," said Mar- aret. "None of them will have prettier faces or nicer ways."

Wesley was waiting before the big church to take care of the am. As they stood watching the people enter the building, Mrs. omstock felt herself growing ill. When they went inside among e lights, saw the flower-decked stage, and the masses of finely essed people, she grew no better. She could hear Margaret and lly softly commenting on what was being done.

"That first chair in the very front row is Elnora's," exulted lly, "cos she's got the highest grades, and so she gets to lead e procession to the platform."

"The first chair!" "Lead the procession!" Mrs. Comstock was mbfounded. The notes of the pipe organ began to fill the ilding in a slow rolling march. Would Elnora lead the pro- ssion in a gingham dress? Or would she be absent and her air vacant on this great occasion? For now, Mrs. Comstock uld see that it was a great occasion. Everyone would remem- r how Elnora had played a few nights before, and they would iss her and pity her. Pity? Because she had no one to care for r. Because she was worse off than if she had no mother. For the st time in her life, Mrs. Comstock began to study herself as she uld appear to others. Every time a junior girl came fluttering wn the aisle, leading someone to a seat, and Mrs. Comstock w a beautiful white dress pass, a wave of positive illness swept er her. What had she done? What would become of Elnora?

As Elnora rode to the city, she answered Wesley's questions in nosyllables so that he thought she was nervous or rehearsing r speech and did not care to talk. Several times the girl tried to l him and realized that if she said the first word it would bring controllable tears. The Bird Woman opened the screen and red unbelievingly.

"Why, I thought you would be ready; you are so late!" she id. "If you have waited to dress here, we must hurry."

"I have nothing to put on," said Elnora.

In bewilderment the Bird Woman drew her inside.

"Did—did——" she faltered. "Did you think you would wear that?"

"No. I thought I would telephone Ellen that there had been an accident and I could not come. I don't know yet how to explain. I'm too sick to think. Oh, do you suppose I can get something made by Tuesday, so that I can graduate?"

"Yes; and you'll get something on you tonight, so that you can lead your class, as you have done for four years. Go to my room and take off that gingham, quickly. Anna, drop everything and come help me."

The Bird Woman ran to the telephone and called Ellen Brownlee.

"Elnora has had an accident. She will be a little late," she said. "You have got to make them wait. Have them play extra music before the march."

Then she turned to the maid. "Tell Benson to have the carriage at the gate, just as soon as he can get it there. Then come to my room. Bring the thread box from the sewing-room, that roll of wide white ribbon on the cutting table, and gather all the white pins from every dresser in the house. But first come with me a minute.

"I want that trunk with the Swamp Angel's stuff in it, from the cedar closet," she panted as they reached the top of the stairs.

They hurried down the hall together and dragged the big trunk to the Bird Woman's room. She opened it and began tossing out white stuff.

"How lucky that she left these things!" she cried. "Here are white shoes, gloves, stockings, fans, everything!"

"I am all ready but a dress," said Elnora.

The Bird Woman began opening closets and pulling out drawers and boxes.

"I think I can make it this way," she said.

She snatched up a creamy lace yoke with long sleeves that recently had been made for her and held it out. Elnora slipped into it, and the Bird Woman began smoothing out wrinkles and

ving in pins. It fitted very well with a little lapping in
back. Next, from among the Angel's clothing she caught
a white silk waist with low neck and elbow sleeves,
d Elnora put it on. It was large enough, but distressingly short
the waist, for the Angel had worn it at a party when she was
teen. The Bird Woman loosened the sleeves and pushed them
a puff on the shoulders, catching them in places with pins.
e began on the wide draping of the yoke, fastening it front,
ck and at each shoulder. She pulled down the waist and
ned it. Next came a soft white dress skirt of her own. By pin-
g her waist band quite four inches above Elnora's, the Bird
oman could secure a perfect Empire sweep, with the clinging
. Then she began with the wide white ribbon that was to trim
new frock for herself, bound it three times around the high
ist effect she had managed, tied the ends in a knot and let them
l to the floor in a beautiful sash.

"I want four white roses, each with two or three leaves," she
ed.

Anna ran to bring them, while the Bird Woman added pins.
"Elnora," she said, "forgive me, but tell me truly. Is your
other so poor as to make this necessary?"

"No," answered Elnora. "Next year I am heir to my share of
er three hundred acres of land covered with almost as valua-
timber as was in the Limberlost. We adjoin it. There could be
rty oil wells drilled that would yield to us the thousands our
ighbors are draining from under us, and the bare land is
rth over one hundred dollars an acre for farming. She is not
or, she is—I don't know what she is. A great trouble soured
d warped her. It made her peculiar. She does not in the
st understand, but it is because she doesn't care to, instead of
norance. She does not——"

Elnora stopped.

"She is—is different," finished the girl.

Anna came with the roses. The Bird Woman set one on the
nt of the draped yoke, one on each shoulder and the last
ong the bright masses of brown hair. Then she turned the
l facing the tall mirror.

"Oh!" panted Elnora. "You are a genius! Why, I will loo as well as any of them."

"Thank goodness for that!" cried the Bird Woman. "If wouldn't do, I should have been ill. You are lovely; altogethe lovely! Ordinarily I shouldn't say that; but when I think of ho you are carpentered, I'm admiring the result."

The organ began rolling out the march as they came in sigh Elnora took her place at the head of the procession, while ever one wondered. Secretly they had hoped that she would b dressed well enough, that she would not appear poor and neg lected. What this radiant young creature, gowned in the mo recent style, her smooth skin flushed with excitement, and a ros -set coronet of red gold on her head, had to do with the girl the knew was difficult to decide. The signal was given and Elnor began the slow march across the vestry and down the aisle. Th music welled softly, and Margaret began to sob without knowin why.

Mrs. Comstock gripped her hands together and shut her eye It seemed an eternity to the suffering woman before Margar caught her arm and whispered, "Oh, Kate! For any sake look a her! Here! The aisle across!"

Mrs. Comstock opened her eyes and directing them where sh was told, gazed intently, and slid down in her seat close to co lapse. She was saved by Margaret's tense clasp and her com mand: "Here! Idiot! Stop that!"

In the blaze of light Elnora climbed the steps to the palm embowered platform, crossed it and took her place. Sixty youn men and women, each of them dressed the best possible, followe her. There were manly, fine-looking men in that class whic Elnora led. There were girls of beauty and grace, but not on of them was handsomer or clothed in better taste than she.

Billy thought the time never would come when Elnora woul see him, but at last she met his eye, then Margaret and Wesle had faint signs of recognition in turn, but there was no soften ing of the girl's face and no hint of a smile when she saw he mother.

Heartsick, Katharine Comstock tried to prove to herself tha

e was justified in what she had done, but she could not. She ied to blame Elnora for not saying that she was to lead a pro- ssion and sit on a platform in the sight of hundreds of people; ıt that was impossible, for she realized that she would have offed and not understood if she had been told. Her heart pained ıtil she suffered with every breath.

When at last the exercises were over she climbed into the car- age and rode home without a word. She did not hear what Margaret and Billy were saying. She scarcely heard Wesley, who rove behind, when he told her that Elnora would not be home ıtil Wednesday. Early the next morning Mrs. Comstock was on er way to Onabasha. She was waiting when the Brownlee store pened. She examined readymade white dresses, but they had nly one of the right size, and it was marked forty dollars. Mrs. Comstock did not hesitate over the price, but whether the ress would be suitable. She would have to ask Elnora. She in- uired her way to the home of the Bird Woman and knocked.

"Is Elnora Comstock here?" she asked the maid.

"Yes, but she is still in bed. I was told to let her sleep as long as e would."

"Maybe I could sit here and wait," said Mrs. Comstock. "I ant to see about getting her a dress for tomorrow. I am her other."

"Then you don't need wait or worry," said the girl cheerfully. There are two women up in the sewing-room at work on a ress for her right now. It will be done in time, and it will be a eauty."

Mrs. Comstock turned and trudged back to the Limberlost. he bitterness in her soul became a physical actuality, which ater would not wash from her lips. She was too late! She was ot needed. Another woman was mothering her girl. Another oman would prepare a beautiful dress such as Elnora had worn ıe previous night. The girl's love and gratitude would go to her. Mrs. Comstock tried the old process of blaming someone else, ut she felt no better. She nursed her grief as closely as ever in the ng days of the girl's absence. She brooded over Elnora's pos- ssion of the forbidden violin and her ability to play it until the

performance could not have been told from her father's. She trie every refuge her mind could conjure, to quiet her heart and re move the fear that the girl never would come home again, bu it persisted. Mrs. Comstock could neither eat nor sleep. She war dered around the cabin and garden. She kept far from the poo where Robert Comstock had sunk from sight for she felt tha it would entomb her also if Elnora did not come home Wedne day morning. The mother told herself that she would wai but the waiting was as bitter as anything she ever had known

When Elnora awoke Monday another dress was in the hands o a seamstress and was soon fitted. It had belonged to the Ange and was a soft white thing that with a little alteration would serv admirably for Commencement and the ball. All that day Elnor worked, helping prepare the auditorium for the exercises, rehear ing the march and the speech she was to make in behalf of th class. The following day was even busier. But her mind was a rest, for the dress was a soft delicate lace easy to change, an the marks of alteration impossible to detect.

The Bird Woman had telephoned to Grand Rapids, explaine the situation and asked the Angel if she might use it. The repl had been to give the girl the contents of the chest. When the Bir Woman told Elnora, tears filled her eyes.

"I will write at once and thank her," she said. "With all he beautiful gowns she does not need them, and I do. They wi serve for me often, and be much finer than anything I coul afford. It is lovely of her to give me the dress and of you to hav it altered for me, as I never could."

The Bird Woman laughed. "I feel religious today," she saic "You know the first and greatest rock of my salvation is 'D unto others.' I'm only doing to you what there was no one to d for me when I was a girl very like you. Anna tells me your mothe was here early this morning and that she came to see about gettin you a dress."

"She is too late!" said Elnora coldly. "She had over a mont to prepare my dresses, and I was to pay for them, so there is n excuse."

"Nevertheless, she is your mother," said the Bird Woman ftly. "I think almost any kind of a mother must be better than ne at all, and you say she has had great trouble."

"She loved my father and he died," said Elnora. "The same ing, in quite as tragic a manner, has happened to thousands of her women, and they have gone on with calm faces and found ppiness in life by loving others. There was something else I n afraid I never shall forget; this I know I shall not, but lking does not help. I must deliver my presents and photographs the crowd. I have a picture and I made a present for you, too, you would care for them."

"I shall love anything you give me," said the Bird Woman. "I now you well enough to know that whatever you do will be eautiful."

Elnora was pleased over that, and as she tried on her dress for ne last fitting she was really happy. She was lovely in the dainty own: it would serve finely for the ball and many other like oc-asions, and it was her very own.

The Bird Woman's driver took Elnora in the carriage and she alled on all the girls with whom she was especially intimate, and ft her picture and the package containing her gift to them. By ne time she returned parcels for her were arriving. Friends eemed to spring from everywhere. Almost everyone she knew ad some gift for her, while because they so loved her the mem-ers of her crowd had made her beautiful presents. There were ooks, vases, silver pieces, handkerchiefs, fans, boxes of flowers nd candy. One big package settled the trouble at Sintons', for it ontained a dainty dress from Margaret, a five-dollar gold piece, onspicuously labeled, "I earned this myself," from Billy, with hich to buy music; and a gorgeous cut-glass perfume bottle would have cost five dollars to fill with even a moderate-priced cent, from Wesley.

In an expressed crate was a fine curly-maple dressing table, sent y Freckles. The drawers were filled with wonderful toilet articles rom the Angel. The Bird Woman added an embroidered linen over and a small silver vase for a few flowers, so no girl of the

class had finer gifts. Elnora laid her head on the table sobbin
happily, and the Bird Woman was almost crying herself. Profess
Henley sent a butterfly book, the grade rooms in which Elno
had taught gave her a set of volumes covering every phase
life afield, in the woods, and water. Elnora had no time to rea
so she carried one of these books around with her hugging it
she went. After she had gone to dress a queer-looking package wa
brought by a small boy who hopped on one foot as he handed
in and said: "Tell Elnora that is from her ma."

"Who are you?" asked the Bird Woman as she took the bundl

"I'm Billy!" announced the boy. "I gave her the five dollar
I earned it myself dropping corn, sticking onions, and pullin
weeds. My, but you got to drop, and stick, and pull a lot befor
it's five dollars' worth."

"Would you like to come in and see Elnora's gifts?"

"Yes, ma'am!" said Billy, trying to stand quietly.

"Gee-mentley!" he gasped. "Does Elnora get all this?"

"Yes."

"I bet you a thousand dollars I be first in my class when
graduate. Say, have the others got a lot more than Elnora?"

"I think not."

"Well, Uncle Wesley said to find out if I could, and if sh
didn't have as much as the rest, he'd buy till she did, if it took
hundred dollars. Say, you ought to know him! He's just scrump
tious! There ain't anybody anywhere finer 'an he is. My, he'
grand!"

"I'm very sure of it!" said the Bird Woman. "I've often hear
Elnora say so."

"I bet you nobody can beat this!" he boasted. Then he stopped
thinking deeply. "I don't know, though," he began reflectively
"Some of them are awful rich; they got big families to give them
things and wagon loads of friends, and I haven't seen what they
have. Now, maybe Elnora is getting left, after all!"

"Don't worry, Billy," she said. "I will watch, and if I find
Elnora is 'getting left' I'll buy her some more things myself. Bu
I'm sure she is not. She has more beautiful gifts now than she wil
know what to do with, and others will come. Tell your Uncle

Vesley his girl is bountifully remembered, very happy, and she nds her dearest love to all of you. Now you must go, so I can elp her dress. You will be there tonight, of course?"

"Yes, sir-ee! She got me a seat, third row from the front, iddle section, so I can see, and she's going to wink at me, after e gets her speech off her mind. She kissed me, too! She's a per-ct lady, Elnora is. I'm going to marry her when I am big ough."

"Why isn't that splendid!" laughed the Bird Woman as she urried upstairs.

"Dear!" she called. "Here is another gift for you."

Elnora was half disrobed as she took the package and, sitting n a couch, opened it. The Bird Woman bent over her and tested ne fabric with her fingers.

"Why, bless my soul!" she cried. "Handwoven, hand-embroi-ered linen, fine as silk. It's priceless! I haven't seen such things n years. My mother had garments like those when I was a child, ut my sisters had them cut up for collars, belts, and fancy waists hile I was small. Look at the exquisite work!"

"Where could it have come from?" cried Elnora.

She shook out a petticoat, with a hand-wrought ruffle a foot eep, then an old-fashioned chemise the neck and sleeve work of hich was elaborate and perfectly wrought. On the breast was inned a note that she hastily opened.

"I was married in these," it read, "and I had intended to be uried in them, but perhaps it would be more sensible for you o graduate and get married in them yourself, if you like. Your nother."

"From my mother!" Wide-eyed, Elnora looked at the Bird Woman. "I never in my life saw the like. Mother does things think I never can forgive, and when I feel hardest, she turns round and does something that makes me think she just must ove me a little bit, after all. Any of the girls would give almost nything to graduate in hand-embroidered linen like that. Money an't buy such things. And they came when I was thinking she lidn't care what became of me. Do you suppose she can be in-ane?"

"Yes," said the Bird Woman. "Wildly insane, if she does nc love you and care what becomes of you."

Elnora arose and held the petticoat to her. "Will you look a it?" she cried. "Only imagine her not getting my dress ready, an then sending me such a petticoat as this! Ellen would pay fift dollars for it and never blink. I suppose mother has had it all m life, and I never saw it before."

"Go take your bath and put on those things," said the Bir Woman. "Forget everything and be happy. She is not insan She is embittered. She did not understand how things would be When she saw, she came at once to provide you a dress. Thi is her way of saying she is sorry she did not get the other. Yo notice she has not spent any money, so perhaps she is quite hones in saying she has none."

"Oh, she is honest!" said Elnora. "She wouldn't care enoug to tell an untruth. She'd say just how things were, no matter wha happened."

Soon Elnora was ready for her dress. She never had looked s well as when she again headed the processional across the flowe and palm-decked stage of the high school auditorium. As sh sat there she could have reached over and dropped a rose sh carried into the seat she had occupied that September mornin when she entered the high school. She spoke the few words sh had to say in behalf of the class beautifully, had the tiny win ready for Billy, and the smile and nod of recognition for Wesle and Margaret. When at last she looked into the eyes of a white faced woman next them, she slipped a hand to her side an raised her skirt the fraction of an inch, just enough to let the em broidered edge of a petticoat show a trifle. When she saw th look of relief which flooded her mother's face, Elnora knew tha forgiveness was in her heart, and that she would go home in th morning.

It was late afternoon before she arrived, and a dray followe with a load of packages. Mrs. Comstock was overwhelmed. Sh sat half dazed and made Elnora show her each costly and beauti ful or simple and useful gift, tell her carefully what it was an from where it came. She studied the faces of Elnora's particula

ends. The gifts from them had to be set in a group. Several times e started to speak and then stopped. At last, between her dry s, came a harsh whisper.

"Elnora, what did you give back for these things?"

"I'll show you," said Elnora cheerfully. "I made the same gifts r the Bird Woman, Aunt Margaret and you if you care for it. ıt I have to run upstairs to get it."

When she returned she handed her mother an oblong frame, nd carved, enclosing Elnora's picture, taken by a schoolmate's mera. She wore her storm-coat and carried a dripping um- ella. From under it looked her bright face; her books and nchbox were on her arm, and across the bottom of the frame as carved, "Your Country Classmate."

Then she offered another frame.

'I am strong on frames," she said. "They seemed to be the best could do without money. I located the maple and the black wal- ıt myself, in a little corner that had been overlooked between ıe river and the ditch. They didn't seem to belong to anyone I just took them. Uncle Wesley said it was all right, and he ıt and hauled them for me. I gave the mill half of each tree for wing and curing the remainder. Then I gave the wood-carver alf of that for making my frames. A photographer gave me a lot spoiled plates, and I boiled off the emulsion, and took the ecimens I framed from my stuff. The man said the white frames ere worth three and a half, and the black ones five. I exchanged ıose little framed pictures for the photographs of the others. For resents, I gave each one of my crowd one like this, only a differ- ıt moth. The Bird Woman gave me the birch bark. She got up north last summer."

Elnora handed her mother a handsome black-walnut frame a oot and a half wide by two long. It finished a small, shallow lass-covered box of birch bark, to the bottom of which clung a ig night moth with delicate pale green wings and long exquisite ailers.

"So you see I did not have to be ashamed of my gifts," said lnora. "I made them myself and raised and mounted the ıoths."

"Moth, you call it," said Mrs. Comstock. "I've seen a few o the things before."

"They are numerous around us every June night, or at lea they used to be," said Elnora. "I've sold hundreds of them, wit butterflies, dragonflies, and other specimens. Now, I must pu away these and get to work, for it is almost June and there ar a few more I want dreadfully. If I find them I will be paid som money for which I have been working."

She was afraid to say college at that time. She thought it woul be better to wait a few days and see if an opportunity would no come when it would work in more naturally. Besides, unless sh could secure the Yellow Emperor she needed to complete he collection, she could not talk college until she was of age, for sh would have no money.

CHAPTER XII

Wherein Margaret Sinton Reveals a Secret, and Mrs. Comstock Possesses the Limberlost

ELNORA, bring me the towel, quick!" cried Mrs. Comstock.

"In a minute, mother," mumbled Elnora.

She was standing before the kitchen mirror, tying the back art of her hair, while the front turned over her face.

"Hurry! There's a varmint of some kind!"

Elnora ran into the sitting-room and thrust the heavy kitchen owel into her mother's hand. Mrs. Comstock swung open the creen door and struck at some object. Elnora tossed the hair rom her face so that she could see past her mother. The girl creamed wildly.

"Don't! Mother, don't!"

Mrs. Comstock struck again. Elnora caught her arm.

"It's the one I want! It's worth a lot of money! Don't! Oh, you hall not!"

"Shan't, missy?" blazed Mrs. Comstock. "When did you get to ossing me?"

The hand that held the screen swept a half-circle and stopped t Elnora's cheek. She staggered with the blow, and across her ace, paled with excitement, a red mark arose rapidly. The screen lammed shut, throwing the creature on the floor before them. Intantly Mrs. Comstock crushed it with her foot. Elnora stepped ack. Excepting the red mark, her face was very white.

"That was the last moth I needed," she said, "to complete a

collection worth three hundred dollars. You've ruined it befo
my eyes!"

"Moth!" cried Mrs. Comstock. "You say that because you a
mad. Moths have big wings. I know a moth!"

"I've kept things from you," said Elnora, "because I didn
dare confide in you. You had no sympathy with me. But you kno
I never told you untruths in all my life."

"It's no moth!" reiterated Mrs. Comstock.

"It is!" cried Elnora. "It's from a case in the ground. Its win
take two or three hours to expand and harden."

"If I had known it was a moth——" Mrs. Comstock waverec

"You did know! I told you! I begged you to stop! It mea
just three hundred dollars to me."

"Bah! Three hundred fiddlesticks!"

"They are what have paid for books, tuition, and clothes fo
the past four years. They are what I could have started on t
college. You've ruined the very one I needed. You never made an
pretence of loving me. At last I'll be equally frank with you.
hate you! You are a selfish, wicked woman! I hate you!"

Elnora turned, went through the kitchen and from the bac
door. She followed the garden path to the gate and walked to
ward the swamp a short distance when reaction overtook her. Sh
dropped on the ground and leaned against a big log. When a litt
child, desperate as now she had tried to die by holding her breath
She had thought in that way to make her mother sorry, but sh
had learned that life was a thing thrust upon her and she coul
not leave it at her wish.

She was so stunned over the loss of that moth, which she ha
childishly named the Yellow Emperor, that she scarcely re
membered the blow. She had thought no luck in all the worl
would be so rare as to complete her collection; now she had bee
forced to see a splendid Imperialis destroyed before her. Ther
was a possibility that she could find another, but she was facin
the certainty that the one she might have had and with whic
she undoubtedly could have attracted others, was spoiled by he
mother. How long she sat there Elnora did not know or care. Sh
simply suffered in dumb, abject misery, an occasional dry sob

aking her. Aunt Margaret was right. Elnora felt that morning at her mother never would be any different. The girl had eached the place where she realized that she could endure it no nger.

As Elnora left the room, Mrs. Comstock took one step after er.

"You little huzzy!" she gasped.

But Elnora was gone. Her mother stood staring.

"She never did lie to me," she muttered. "I guess it was a oth. And the only one she needed to get three hundred dollars, e said. I wish I hadn't been so fast! I never saw anything like . I thought it was some deadly, stinging, biting thing. A body oes have to be mighty careful here. But likely I've spilled the ilk now. Pshaw! She can find another! There's no use to be olish. Maybe moths are like snakes, where there's one, there re two."

Mrs. Comstock took the broom and swept the moth out of the oor. Then she got down on her knees and carefully examined the eps, logs and the earth of the flower beds at each side. She found e place where the creature had emerged from the ground, and e hard, dark-brown case which had enclosed it, still wet inside. hen she knew Elnora had been right. It was a moth. Its wings ad been damp and not expanded. Mrs. Comstock never before ad seen one in that state, and she did not know how they origi- ated. She had thought all of them came from cases spun on trees r against walls or boards. She had seen only enough to know that here were such things; as a flash of white told her that an ermine as on her premises, or a sharp "buzzzzz" warned her of a rattler.

So it was from creatures like that Elnora had secured her school oney. In one sickening sweep there rushed into the heart of the oman a full realization of the width of the gulf that separated her rom her child. Lately many things had pointed toward it, none ore plainly than when Elnora, like a reincarnation of her father, ad stood fearlessly before a large city audience and played with ven greater skill than he, on what Mrs. Comstock felt very cer- ain was his violin. But that little crawling creature of earth, rushed by her before its splendid yellow and lavender wings

could spread and carry it into the mystery of night, had per formed a miracle.

"We are nearer strangers to each other than we are with an of the neighbors," she muttered.

So one of the Almighty's most delicate and beautiful creation was sacrificed without fulfilling the law, yet none of its species eve served so glorious a cause, for at last Mrs. Comstock's inner visio had cleared. She went through the cabin mechanically. Ever few minutes she glanced toward the back walk to see if Elnor were coming. She knew arrangements had been made with Mar garet to go to the city some time that day, so she grew mor nervous and uneasy every moment. She was haunted by the fea that the blow might discolor Elnora's cheek; that she would te Margaret. She went down the back walk, looking intently in al directions, left the garden and followed the swamp path. Her ste was noiseless on the soft, black earth, and soon she came clos enough to see Elnora. Mrs. Comstock stood looking at the gir in troubled uncertainty. Not knowing what to say, at last sh turned and went back to the cabin.

Noon came and she prepared dinner, calling, as she always did when Elnora was in the garden, but she got no response, and th girl did not come. A little after one o'clock Margaret stopped a the gate.

"Elnora has changed her mind. She is not going," called Mrs Comstock.

She felt that she hated Margaret as she hitched her horse and came up the walk instead of driving on.

"You must be mistaken," said Margaret. "I was going on purpose for her. She asked me to take her. I had no errand Where is she?"

"I will call her," said Mrs. Comstock.

She followed the path again, and this time found Elnora sit ting on the log. Her face was swollen and discolored, and her eyes red with crying. She paid no attention to her mother.

"Mag Sinton is here," said Mrs. Comstock harshly. "I told her you had changed your mind, but she said you asked her to go with you, and she had nothing to go for herself."

Elnora arose, recklessly waded through the deep swamp grasses
ıd so reached the path ahead of her mother. Mrs. Comstock
llowed as far as the garden, but she could not enter the cabin.
ıe busied herself among the vegetables, barely looking up when
e back-door screen slammed noisily. Margaret Sinton ap-
oached colorless, her eyes so angry that Mrs. Comstock shrank
ck.

"What's the matter with Elnora's face?" demanded Margaret.

Mrs. Comstock made no reply.

"You struck her, did you?"

"I thought you wasn't blind!"

"I have been, for twenty long years now, Kate Comstock,"
id Margaret Sinton, "but my eyes are open at last. What I see
that I've done you no good and Elnora a big wrong. I had an
ea that it would kill you to know, but I guess you are tough
ıough to stand anything. Kill or cure, you get it now!"

"What are you frothing about?" coolly asked Mrs. Comstock.

"You!" cried Margaret. "You! The woman who doesn't pre-
nd to love her only child. Who lets her grow to a woman, as
ou have let Elnora, and can't be satisfied with every sort of
eglect, but must add abuse yet; and all for a fool idea about a
an who wasn't worth his salt!"

Mrs. Comstock picked up a hoe.

"Go right on!" she said. "Empty yourself. It's the last thing
ou'll ever do!"

"Then I'll make a tidy job of it," said Margaret. "You'll not
uch me. You'll stand there and hear the truth at last, and be-
ıuse I dare face you and tell it, you will know in your soul it is
uth. When Robert Comstock shaved that quagmire out there
close he went in, he wanted to keep you from knowing where
e was coming from. He'd been to see Elvira Carney. They had
ans to go to a dance that night——"

"Close your lips!" said Mrs. Comstock in a voice of deadly
ıiet.

"You know I wouldn't dare open them if I wasn't telling you
ıe truth. I can prove what I say. I was coming from Reeds. It
as hot in the woods and I stopped at Carney's as I passed for a

drink. Elvira's bedridden old mother heard me, and she was s crazy for someone to talk with, I stepped in a minute. I sa Robert come down the path. Elvira saw him, too, so she ran ou of the house to head him off. It looked funny, and I just d liberately moved where I could see and hear. He brought her h violin, and told her to get ready and meet him in the wood with it that night, and they would go to a dance. She took it an hid it in the loft to the well-house and promised she'd go."

"Are you done?" demanded Mrs. Comstock.

"No. I am going to tell you the whole story. You don't spar Elnora anything. I shan't spare you. I hadn't been here that da but I can tell you just how he was dressed, which way he wen and every word they said, though they thought I was busy wit her mother and wouldn't notice them. Put down your hoe, Kat I went to Elvira, told her what I knew and made her give m Comstock's violin for Elnora over three years ago. She's bee playing it ever since. I won't see her slighted and abused anothe day on account of a man who would have broken your heart if h had lived. Six months more would have showed you what every body else knew. He was one of those men who couldn't trust him self, and so no woman was safe with him. Now, will you dro grieving over him, and do Elnora justice?"

Mrs. Comstock grasped the hoe tighter and turning she wen down the walk, and started across the woods to the home o Elvira Carney. With averted head she passed the pool, steadil pursuing her way. Elvira Carney, hanging towels across the bac fence, saw her coming and went toward the gate to meet her Twenty years she had dreaded that visit. Since Margaret Sinto had compelled her to produce the violin she had hidden so long because she was afraid to destroy it, she had come closer ex pectation than dread. The wages of sin are the hardest debts o earth to pay, and they are always collected at inconvenient time and unexpected places. Mrs. Comstock's face and hair were s white that her dark eyes seemed burned into their setting. Si lently she stared at the woman before her a long time.

"I might have saved myself the trouble of coming," she said at last. "I see you are guilty as sin!"

"What has Mag Sinton been telling you?" panted the miserable oman, gripping the fence.

"The truth!" answered Mrs. Comstock succinctly. "Guilt is in very line of your face, in your eyes, all over your wretched body. I'd taken a good look at you any time in all these past years, o doubt I could have seen it just as plain as I can now. No oman or man can do what you've done, and not get a mark set n them for everyone to read."

"Mercy!" gasped weak little Elvira Carney. "Have mercy!"

"Mercy?" scoffed Mrs. Comstock. "Mercy! That's a nice word om you! How much mercy did you have on me? Where's the ercy that sent Comstock to the slime of the bottomless quag- ire, and left me to see it, and then struggle on in agony all these ears? How about the mercy of letting me neglect my baby all e days of her life? Mercy! Do you really dare use the word to e?"

"If you knew what I've suffered!"

"Suffered?" jeered Mrs. Comstock. "That's interesting. And ay, what have you suffered?"

"All the neighbors have suspected and been down on me. ain't had a friend. I've always felt guilty of his death! I've seen m go down a thousand times, plain as ever you did. Many's e night I've stood on the other bank of that pool and listened you, and I tried to throw myself in to keep from hearing you, ut I didn't dare. I knew God would send me to burn forever, ut I'd better done it; for now, He has set the burning on my ody, and every hour it is slowly eating the life out of me. The octor says it's a cancer——"

Mrs. Comstock exhaled a long breath. Her grip on the hoe laxed and her stature lifted to towering height.

"I didn't know, or care, when I came here, just what I did," e said. "But my way is beginning to clear. If the guilt of your ul has come to a head, in a cancer on your body, it looks as if e Almighty didn't need any of my help in meting out His unishments. I really couldn't fix up anything to come anywhere ear that. If you are going to burn until your life goes out with at sort of fire, you don't owe me anything!"

"Oh, Katharine Comstock!" groaned Elvira Carney, clingin to the fence for support.

"Looks as if the Bible is right when it says, 'The wages of si is death,' doesn't it?" asked Mrs. Comstock. "Instead of doing woman's work in life, you chose the smile of invitation, and th dress of unearned cloth. Now you tell me you are marked to bur to death with the unquenchable fire. And him! It was short with him, but let me tell you he got his share! He left me with a untruth on his lips, for he told me he was going to take his violi to Onabasha for a new key, when he carried it to you. Every vo of love and constancy he ever made me was a lie, after he touche your lips, so when he tried the wrong side of the quagmire, to hid from me the direction in which he was coming, it reached ou for him, and it got him. It didn't hurry, either! It sucked hir down, slow and deliberate."

"Mercy!" groaned Elvira Carney. "Mercy!"

"I don't know the word," said Mrs. Comstock. "You took a that out of me long ago. The past twenty years haven't been c the sort that taught mercy. I've never had any on myself and non on my child. Why in the name of justice, should I have mercy o you, or on him? You were both older than I, both strong, san people, you deliberately chose your course when you lured him and he, when he was unfaithful to me. When a Loose Man an a Light Woman face the end the Almighty ordained for them why should they shout at me for mercy? What did I have to d with it?"

Elvira Carney sobbed in panting gasps.

"You've got tears, have you?" marveled Mrs. Comstock "Mine all dried long ago. I've none left to shed over my waste life, my disfigured face and hair, my years of struggle with a man' work, my wreck of land among the tilled fields of my neighbor or the final knowledge that the man I so gladly would have die to save, wasn't worth the sacrifice of a rattlesnake. If anythin yet could wring a tear from me, it would be the thought of th awful injustice I always have done my girl. If I'd lay hand o you for anything, it would be for that."

"Kill me if you want to," sobbed Elvira Carney. "I know hat I deserve it, and I don't care."

"You are getting your killing fast enough to suit me," said Mrs. Comstock. "I wouldn't touch you, any more than I would im, if I could. Once is all any man or woman deceives me about he holiest things of life. I wouldn't touch you any more than I would the black plague. I am going back to my girl."

Mrs. Comstock turned and started swiftly through the woods, ut she had gone only a few rods when she stopped, and leaning n the hoe, she stood thinking deeply. Then she turned back. lvira still clung to the fence, sobbing bitterly.

"I don't know," said Mrs. Comstock, "but I left a wrong mpression with you. I don't want you to think that I believe the lmighty set a cancer to burning you as a punishment for your ns. I don't! I think a lot more of the Almighty. With a whole ky full of worlds on His hands to manage, I'm not believing that Ie has time to look down on ours, and pick you out of all the illions of us sinners, and set a special kind of torture to eating ou. It wouldn't be a gentlemanly thing to do, and first of all, he Almighty is bound to be a gentleman. I think likely a bruise nd bad blood is what caused your trouble. Anyway, I've got to ell you that the cleanest housekeeper I ever knew, and one of he noblest Christian women, was slowly eaten up by a cancer. he got hers from the careless work of a poor doctor. The Al- ighty is to forgive sin and heal disease, not to invent and spread ."

She had gone only a few steps when she again turned back. "If you will gather a lot of red clover bloom, make a tea strong s lye of it, and drink quarts, I think likely it will help you, if you re not too far gone. Anyway, it will cool your blood and make he burning easier to bear."

Then she swiftly went home. Enter the lonely cabin she could ot, neither could she sit outside and think. She attacked a bed f beets and hoed until the perspiration ran from her face and ody, then she began on the potatoes. When she was too tired o take another stroke she bathed and put on dry clothing. In

securing her dress she noticed her husband's carefully preserve clothing lining one wall. She gathered it in an armload and ca ried it to the swamp. Piece by piece she pitched into the gree maw of the quagmire all those articles she had dusted careful and fought moths from for years, and stood watching as it slow sucked them down. She went back to her room and gathere every scrap that had in any way belonged to Robert Comstoc excepting his gun and revolver, and threw it into the swamp. The for the first time she set her door wide open.

She was too weary now to do more, but an urging unrest dro her. She wanted Elnora. It seemed to her she never could wa until the girl came and delivered her judgment. At last in a effort to get nearer to her, Mrs. Comstock climbed the stai and stood looking around Elnora's room. It was very unfamilia The pictures were strange to her. Commencement had filled with packages and bundles. The walls were covered with cocoon moths and dragonflies were pinned everywhere. Under the be she could see half a dozen large white boxes. She pulled out on and lifted the lid. The bottom was covered with a sheet of thi cork, and on long pins sticking in it were large, velvet-winge moths. Each one was labeled, always there were two of a kin in many cases four, showing under and upper wings of both ma and female. They were of every color and shape.

Mrs. Comstock caught her breath sharply. When and whe had Elnora found them? They were the most exquisite sight th woman ever had seen, so she opened all the boxes to feast o their beautiful contents. As she did so there came more fully sense of the distance between her and her child. She could n understand how Elnora had gone to school, and performed s much work secretly. When it was finished, to the last moth, sh the mother who should have been the first confidant and helpe had been the one to bring disappointment. Small wonder Elno had come to hate her.

Mrs. Comstock carefully closed and replaced the boxes, an again stood looking around the room. This time her eyes rested o some books she did not remember having seen before, so sh picked up one and found that it was a moth book. She glance

ver the first pages and was soon eagerly reading. When the text ached the classification of species, she laid it down, took up nother and read the introductory chapters. By that time her rain was in a confused jumble of ideas about capturing moths ith differing baits and bright lights.

She went downstairs thinking deeply. Being unable to sit still nd having nothing else to do she glanced at the clock and began reparing supper. The work dragged. A chicken was snatched up nd dressed hurriedly. A spice cake sprang into being. Straw-erries that had been intended for preserves went into shortcake. elicious odors crept from the cabin. She put many extra uches on the table and then commenced watching the road. verything was ready, but Elnora did not come. Then began the nxious process of trying to keep cooked food warm and not spoil . The birds went to bed and dusk came. Mrs. Comstock gave up e fire and set the supper on the table. Then she went out and sat n the front-door step watching night creep around her. She arted eagerly as the gate creaked, but it was only Wesley Sinton oming.

"Katharine, Margaret and Elnora passed where I was working is afternoon, and Margaret got out of the carriage and called e to the fence. She told me what she had done. I've come to say o you that I am sorry. She has heard me threaten to do it a good any times, but I never would have got it done. I'd give a good eal if I could undo it, but I can't, so I've come to tell you how orry I am."

"You've got something to be sorry for," said Mrs. Comstock, but likely we ain't thinking of the same thing. It hurts me less to now the truth than to live in ignorance. If Mag had the sense of pewee, she'd told me long ago. That's what hurts me, to think at both of you knew Robert was not worth an hour of honest rief, yet you'd let me mourn him all these years and neglect lnora while I did it. If I have anything to forgive you, that is hat it is."

Wesley removed his hat and sat on a bench.

"Katharine," he said solemnly, "nobody ever knows how to ake you."

"Would it be asking too much to take me for having a fe grains of plain common sense?" she inquired. "You've known a this time that Comstock got what he deserved, when he unde took to sneak in an unused way across a swamp, with which h was none too familiar. Now I should have thought that you' figure that knowing the same thing would be the best method t cure me of pining for him, and slighting my child."

"Heaven only knows we have thought of that, and talked of often, but we were both too big cowards. We didn't dare te you."

"So you have gone on year after year, watching me show it difference to Elnora, and yet a little horse-sense would hav pointed out to you that she was my salvation. Why, look at it! No married quite a year. All his vows of love and fidelity made to m before the Almighty forgotten in a few months, and a dance an a Light Woman so alluring he had to lie and sneak for them. Wha kind of a prospect is that for a life? I know men and women. A honorable man is an honorable man, and a liar is a liar; both are born and not made. One cannot change to the other any mor than that same old leopard can change its spots. After a man tell a woman the first untruth of that sort, the others come piling thick fast, and mountain high. The desolation they bring in their wak overshadows anything I have suffered completely. If he had lived six months more I should have known him for what he was born to be. It was in the blood of him. His father and grandfathe before him were fiddling, dancing people; but I was certain o him. I thought we could leave Ohio and come out here alone, and I could so love him and interest him in his work, that he would b a man. Of all the fool, fruitless jobs, making anything of a creature that begins by deceiving her, is the foolest a sane woman ever undertook. I am more than sorry you and Margaret didn' see your way clear to tell me long ago. I'd have found it out in a few more months if he had lived, and I wouldn't have borne it a day. The man who breaks his vows to me once, doesn't get the second chance. I give truth and honor. I have a right to ask it in return. I am glad I understand at last. Now, if Elnora wil forgive me, we will take a new start and see what we can make

ut of what is left of life. If she won't, then it will be my time to earn what suffering really means."

"But she will," said Wesley. "She must! She can't help it when hings are explained."

"I notice she isn't hurrying any about coming home. Do you now where she is or what she is doing?"

"I do not. But likely she will be along soon. I must go help illy with the night work. Good-bye, Katharine. Thank the Lord ou have come to yourself at last!"

They shook hands and Wesley went down the road while Mrs. Comstock entered the cabin. She could not swallow food. She tood in the back door watching the sky for moths, but they did ot seem to be very numerous. Her spirits sank and she breathed nevenly. Then she heard the front screen. She reached the niddle door as Elnora touched the foot of the stairs.

"Hurry, and get ready, Elnora," she said. "Your supper is lmost spoiled now."

Elnora closed the stair door behind her, and for the first time in er life, threw the heavy lever which barred out anyone from ownstairs. Mrs. Comstock heard the thud, and knew what it neant. She reeled slightly and caught the doorpost for support. For a few minutes she clung there, then sank to the nearest chair. After a long time she arose and stumbling half blindly, she put the ood in the cupboard and covered the table. She took the lamp n one hand, the butter in the other, and started to the spring ouse. Something brushed close her face, and she looked just n time to see a winged creature rise above the cabin and sail way.

"That was a night bird," she muttered. As she stopped to set he butter in the water, came another thought. "Perhaps it was a noth!" Mrs. Comstock dropped the butter and hurried out with he lamp; she held it high above her head and waited until her rms ached. Small insects of night gathered, and at last a little lusty miller, but nothing came of any size.

"I must go where they are, if I get them," muttered Mrs. Comstock.

She went to the barn after the stout pair of high boots she

used in feeding stock in deep snow. Throwing these beside th back door she climbed to the loft over the spring house, an hunted an old lard oil lantern and one of first manufacture for oi Both these she cleaned and filled. She listened until everything u stairs had been still for over half an hour. By that time it wa past eleven o'clock. Then she took the lantern from the kitche and two old ones, a handful of matches, a ball of twine, an went from the cabin, softly closing the door.

Sitting on the back steps, she put on the boots, and then stoo gazing into the perfumed June night, first in the direction of th woods on her land, then toward the Limberlost. Its outline was s dark and forbidding she shuddered and went down the garde following the path toward the woods, but as she neared the poo her knees wavered and her courage fled. The knowledge that i her soul she was now glad Robert Comstock was at the botto of it made a coward of her, who fearlessly had mourned hi there, nights untold. She could not go on. She skirted the bac of the garden, crossed a field, and came out on the road. Soon sh reached the Limberlost. She hunted until she found the old trai then followed it stumbling over logs and through clinging vin and grasses. The heavy boots clumped on her feet, overhangin branches whipped her face and pulled her hair. But her eye were on the sky as she went straining into the night, hoping t find signs of a living creature on wing.

By and by she began to see the wavering flight of something sh thought near the right size. She had no idea where she was, bu she stopped, lighted a lantern and hung it as high as she coul reach. A little distance away she placed the second and then th third. The objects came nearer and sick with disappointment sh saw that they were bats. Crouching in the damp swamp grasse without a thought of snakes or venomous insects, she waited, he eyes roving from lantern to lantern. Once she thought a creatur of high flight dropped near the lard oil light, so she arose breath lessly waiting, but either it passed or it was an illusion. Sh glanced at the old lantern, then at the new, and was on her fee in an instant creeping close. Something large as a small bird wa fluttering around. Mrs. Comstock began to perspire, while he

and shook wildly. Closer she crept and just as she reached for it, omething similar swept past and both flew away together.

Mrs. Comstock set her teeth and stood shivering. For a long me the locusts rasped, the whip-poor-wills cried and a steady um of night life throbbed in her ears. Away in the sky she saw omething coming when it was no larger than a falling leaf. traight toward the light it flew. Mrs. Comstock began to pray loud.

"This way, O Lord! Make it come this way! Please! O Lord, end it lower!"

The moth hesitated at the first light, then slowly, easily it came oward the second, as if following a path of air. It touched a leaf ear the lantern and settled. As Mrs. Comstock reached for it a hin yellow spray wet her hand and the surrounding leaves. When s wings raised above its back, her fingers came together. She eld the moth to the light. It was nearer brown than yellow, and he remembered having seen some like it in the boxes that after- oon. It was not the one needed to complete the collection, but Elnora might want it, so Mrs. Comstock held on. Then the Almighty was kind, or nature was sufficient, as you look at it; for ollowing the law of its being when disturbed, the moth again hrew the spray by which some suppose it attracts its kind, and berally sprinkled Mrs. Comstock's dress front and arms. From hat instant, she became the best moth bait ever invented. Every Polyphemus in range hastened to her, and other fluttering crea- ures of night followed. The influx came her way. She snatched vildly here and there until she had one in each hand and no lace to put them. She could see more coming, and her aching eart, swollen with the strain of long excitement, hurt pitifully. She prayed in broken exclamations that did not always sound everent, but never was human soul in more intense earnest.

Moths were coming. She had one in each hand. They were not ellow, and she did not know what to do. She glanced around to ry to discover some way to keep what she had, and her throbbing eart stopped and every muscle stiffened. There was the dim out- ine of a crouching figure not two yards away, and a pair of eyes heir owner thought hidden, caught the light in a cold stream.

Her first impulse was to scream and fly for life. Before her li could open a big moth alighted on her breast while she fe another walking over her hair. All sense of caution deserted he She did not care to live if she could not replace the yellow mot she had killed. She turned her eyes to those among the leaves.

"Here, you!" she cried hoarsely. "I need you! Get yourself ou here, and help me. These critters are going to get away from m Hustle!"

Pete Corson parted the bushes and stepped into the light.

"Oh, it's you!" said Mrs. Comstock. "I might have known But you gave me a start. Here, hold these until I make some so of bag for them. Go easy! If you break them I don't guarante what will happen to you!"

"Pretty fierce, ain't you!" laughed Pete, but he advanced an held out his hands. "For Elnora, I s'pose?"

"Yes," said Mrs. Comstock. "In a mad fit, I trampled one thi morning, and by the luck of the old boy himself it was the las moth she needed to complete a collection. I got to get another on or die."

"Then I guess it's your funeral," said Pete. "There ain't chance in a dozen the right one will come. What color was it?"

"Yellow, and big as a bird."

"The Emperor, likely," said Pete. "You dig for that kind, an they are not numerous, so's 'at you can smash 'em for fun."

"Well, I can try to get one, anyway," said Mrs. Comstock. " forgot all about bringing anything to put them in. You take pinch on their wings until I make a poke."

Mrs. Comstock removed her apron, tearing off the strings. She unfastened and stepped from the skirt of her calico dress. Wit one apron string she tied shut the band and placket. She pulle a wire pin from her hair, stuck it through the other string, an using it as a bodkin ran it around the hem of her skirt, so shortl she had a large bag. She put several branches inside to which the moths could cling, closed the mouth partially and held i toward Pete.

"Put your hand well down and let the things go!" she ordered. "But be careful, man! Don't run into the twigs! Easy! That's

ne. Now the other. Is the one on my head gone? There was one n my dress, but I guess it flew. Here comes a kind of a gray-ooking one."

Pete slipped several more moths into the bag.

"Now, that's five, Mrs. Comstock," he said. "I'm sorry, but ou'll have to make that do. You must get out of here lively. Your lights will be taken for hurry calls, and inside the next hour couple of men will ride here like fury. They won't be nice unday-school men, and they won't hold bags and catch moths or you. You must go quick!"

Mrs. Comstock laid down the bag and pulled one of the lanterns ower.

"I won't budge a step," she said. "This land doesn't belong o you. You have no right to order me off it. Here I stay until I et a Yellow Emperor, and no little petering thieves of this neigh-orhood can scare me away."

"You don't understand," said Pete. "I'm willing to help Elnora, nd I'd take care of you, if I could, but there will be too many or me, and they will be mad at being called out for nothing."

"Well, who's calling them out?" demanded Mrs. Comstock. I'm catching moths. If a lot of good-for-nothings get fooled into osing some sleep, why let them, they can't hurt me, or stop my ork."

"They can, and they'll do both."

"Well, I'll see them do it!" said Mrs. Comstock. "I've got Robert's revolver in my dress, and I can shoot as straight as any nan, if I'm mad enough. Anyone who interferes with me tonight vill find me mad a-plenty. There goes another!"

She stepped into the light and waited until a big brown moth ettled on her and was easily taken. Then in light, airy flight came delicate pale green thing, and Mrs. Comstock started in pursuit. But the scent was not right. The moth fluttered high, then dropped ower, still lower, and sailed away. With outstretched hands Mrs. Comstock pursued it. She hurried one way and another, then ran ver an object which tripped her and she fell. She regained her feet n an instant, but she had lost sight of the moth. With livid face he turned to the crouching man.

"You nasty, sneaking son of Satan!" she cried. "Why are yo hiding there? You made me lose the one I wanted most of an I've had a chance at yet. Get out of here! Go this minute, or I'l fill your worthless carcass so full of holes you'll do to sift cornmeal Go, I say! I'm using the Limberlost tonight, and I won't b stopped by the devil himself! Cut like fury, and tell the rest o them they can just go home. Pete is going to help me, and he i all of you I need. Now go!"

The man turned and went. Pete leaned against a tree, hel his mouth shut and shook inwardly. Mrs. Comstock came bac panting.

"The old scoundrel made me lose that!" she said. "If any one else comes snooping around here I'll just blow them up t start with. I haven't time to talk. Suppose that had been yellow I'd have killed that man, sure! The Limberlost isn't safe tonight and the sooner those whelps find it out, the better it will b for them."

Pete stopped laughing to look at her. He saw that she wa speaking the truth. She was quite past reason, sense, or fear. Th soft night air stirred the wet hair around her temples, the flicker ing lanterns made her face a ghastly green. She would stop at noth ing, that was evident. Pete suddenly began catching moths wit exemplary industry. In putting one into the bag, another escaped

"We must not try that again," said Mrs. Comstock. "Now what will we do?"

"We are close to the old case," said Pete. "I think I can get int it. Maybe we could slip the rest in there."

"That's a fine idea!" said Mrs. Comstock. "They'll have s much room there they won't be likely to hurt themselves, and the books say they don't fly in daytime unless they are disturbed, s they will settle when it's light, and I can come with Elnora t get them."

They captured two more, and then Pete carried them to the case.

"Here comes a big one!" he cried as he returned.

Mrs. Comstock looked up and stepped out with a prayer on her

ps. She could not tell the color at that distance, but the moth ppeared different from the others. On it came, dropping lower nd darting from light to light. As it swept near her, "O Heavenly ather!" exulted Mrs. Comstock, "it's yellow! Careful, Pete! our hat, maybe!"

Pete made a long sweep. The moth wavered above the hat and iled away. Mrs. Comstock leaned against a tree and covered her ce with her shaking hands.

"That is my punishment!" she cried. "Oh, Lord, if you will ive a moth like that into my possession, I'll always be a better oman!"

The Emperor again came in sight. Pete stood tense and ready. Irs. Comstock stepped into the light and watched the moth's ourse. Then a second appeared in pursuit of the first. The larger ne wavered into the radius of light once more. The perspiration olled down the man's face. He half lifted the hat.

"Pray, woman! Pray now!" he panted.

"I guess I best get over by that lard oil light and go to work," reathed Mrs. Comstock. "The Lord knows this is all in prayer, ut it's no time for words just now. Ready, Pete! You are going o get a chance first!"

Pete made another long, steady sweep, but the moth darted eneath the hat. In its flight it came straight toward Mrs. Comtock. She snatched off the remnant of apron she had tucked into er petticoat band and held the calico before her. The moth struck ull against it and clung to the goods. Pete crept up stealthily. The second moth followed the first, and the spray showered he apron.

"Wait!" gasped Mrs. Comstock. "I think they have settled. The ooks say they won't leave now."

The big pale yellow creature clung firmly, lowering and raising s wings. The other came nearer. Mrs. Comstock held the cloth ith rigid hands, while Pete could hear her breathing in short usts.

"Shall I try now?" he implored.

"Wait!" whispered the woman. "Something seems to say wait!"

The night breeze stiffened and gently waved the apron. Locus rasped, mosquitoes hummed and frogs sang uninterruptedly. musky odor slowly filled the air.

"Now shall I?" questioned Pete.

"No. Leave them alone. They are safe now. They are min They are my salvation. God and the Limberlost gave them to m They won't move for hours. The books all say so. O Heaven Father, I am thankful to You, and you, too, Pete Corson! Yo are a good man to help me. Now, I can go home and face m girl."

Instead, Mrs. Comstock dropped suddenly. She spread th apron across her knees. The moths remained undisturbed. The her tired white head dropped, the tears she had thought forev dried gushed forth, and she sobbed for pure joy.

"Oh, I wouldn't do that now, you know!" comforted Pet "Think of getting two! That's more than you ever could hav expected. A body would think you would cry if you hadn't g any. Come on, now. It's almost morning. Let me help you home.

Pete took the bag and the two old lanterns. Mrs. Comstoc carried her moths and the best lantern and went ahead to light th way.

Elnora had sat beside her window far into the night. At last sh undressed and went to bed, but sleep would not come. She ha gone to the city to talk with members of the School Board abou a room in the grades. There was a possibility that she might secur the moth, and so be able to start to college that fall, but if she di not, then she wanted the school. She had been given some en couragement, but she was so unhappy that nothing mattered. Sh could not see the way open to anything in life, save a long serie of disappointments, while she remained with her mother. Ye Margaret Sinton had advised her to go home and try once more Margaret had seemed so sure there would be a change for th better, that Elnora had consented, although she had no hope her self. So strong is the bond of blood, she could not make up he mind to seek a home elsewhere, even after the day that had passed Unable to sleep she arose at last, and the room being warm, sh sat on the floor close the window. The lights in the swamp caugh

er eye. She was very uneasy, for quite a hundred of her best
oths were in the case. However, there was no money, and no one
ver had touched a book or any of her apparatus. Watching the
ghts set her thinking, and before she realized it, she was in a
anic of fear.

She hurried down the stairway softly calling her mother. There
as no answer. She lightly stepped across the sitting-room and
oked in at the open door. There was no one, and the bed had
ot been used. Her first thought was that her mother had gone to
ie pool; and the Limberlost was alive with signals. Pity and fear
ingled in the heart of the girl. She opened the kitchen door,
ossed the garden and ran back to the swamp. As she neared it
ie listened, but she could hear only the usual voices of night.

"Mother!" she called softly. Then louder, "Mother!"

There was not a sound. Chilled with fright she hurried back
o the cabin. She did not know what to do. She understood what
ie lights in the Limberlost meant. Where was her mother? She
as afraid to enter, while she was growing very cold and still
ore fearful about remaining outside. At last she went to her
other's room, picked up the gun, carried it into the kitchen, and
owding in a little corner behind the stove, she waited in
embling anxiety. The time was dreadfully long before she
eard her mother's voice. Then she decided someone had been ill
nd sent for her, so she took courage, and stepping swiftly across
ie kitchen she unbarred the door and drew back from sight
eside the table.

Mrs. Comstock entered dragging her heavy feet. Her dress skirt
as gone, her petticoat wet and drabbled, and the waist of her
ress was almost torn from her body. Her hair hung in damp
rings; her eyes were red with crying. In one hand she held the
antern, and in the other stiffly extended before her, on a wad of
alico reposed a magnificent pair of Yellow Emperors. Elnora
tared, her lips parted.

"Shall I put these others in the kitchen?" inquired a man's
oice.

The girl shrank back to the shadows.

"Yes, anywhere inside the door," replied Mrs. Comstock as she

moved a few steps to make way for him. Pete's head appeare
He set down the moths and was gone.

"Thank you, Pete, more than ever woman thanked yo
before!" said Mrs. Comstock.

She placed the lantern on the table and barred the door. As sh
turned Elnora came into view. Mrs. Comstock leaned toward he
and held out the moths. In a voice vibrant with tones never befo
heard she said: "Elnora, my girl, mother's found you anoth
moth!"

CHAPTER XIII

Wherein Mother Love Is Bestowed on Elnora, and She Finds an Assistant in Moth Hunting

LNORA awoke at dawn and lay gazing around the unfamiliar om. She noticed that every vestige of masculine attire and be-ngings was gone, and knew, without any explanation, what that eant. For some reason every tangible evidence of her father was nished, and she was at last to be allowed to take his place. e turned to look at her mother. Mrs. Comstock's face was white d haggard, but on it rested an expression of profound peace nora never before had seen. As she studied the features on the low beside her, the heart of the girl throbbed in tenderness. She alized as fully as anyone else could what her mother had ffered. Thoughts of the night brought shuddering fear. She ftly slipped from the bed, went to her room, dressed and entered e kitchen to attend the Emperors and prepare breakfast. The ir had been left clinging to the piece of calico. The calico was ere and a few pieces of beautiful wing. A mouse had eaten the oths!

"Well, of all the horrible luck!" gasped Elnora.

With the first thought of her mother, she caught up the rem-nts of the moths, burying them in the ashes of the stove. She ok the bag to her room, hurriedly releasing its contents, but ere was not another yellow one. Her mother had said some had en confined in the case in the Limberlost. There was still a hope at an Emperor might be among them. She peeped at her mother, no still slept soundly.

Elnora took a large piece of mosquito netting, and ran to th swamp. Throwing it over the top of the case, she unlocked th door. She reeled, faint with distress. The living moths that ha been confined there in their fluttering to escape to night and th mates they sought not only had wrecked the other specimens the case, but torn themselves to fringes on the pins. A third of th rarest moths of the collection for the man of India were antenna less, legless, wingless, and often headless. Elnora sobbed alou

"This is overwhelming," she said at last. "It is making a fatali of me. I am beginning to think things happen as they are ordaine from the beginning, this plainly indicating that there is to b no college, at least, this year, for me. My life is all mountainto or canyon. I wish someone would lead me into a few days of 'gree pastures.' Last night I went to sleep on mother's arm, the moth all secured, love and college, certainties. This morning I wake t find all my hopes wrecked. I simply don't dare let mother kno that instead of helping me, she has ruined my collection. Ever thing is gone—unless the love lasts. That actually seemed tru I believe I will go see."

The love remained. Indeed, in the overflow of the lon hardened, pent-up heart, the girl was almost suffocated wi tempestuous caresses and generous offerings. Before the day w over, Elnora realized that she never had known her mother. Th woman who now busily went through the cabin, her eyes brigh eager, alert, constantly planning, was a stranger. Her very fa was different, while it did not seem possible that during one nigh the acid of twenty years could disappear from a voice and leav it sweet and pleasant.

For the next few days Elnora worked at mounting the moths h mother had taken. She had to go to the Bird Woman and te about the disaster, but Mrs. Comstock was allowed to think tha Elnora delivered the moths when she made the trip. If she ha told her what actually happened, the chances were that Mr Comstock again would have taken possession of the Limberlos hunting there until she replaced all the moths that had been d stroyed. But Elnora knew from experience what it meant to colle such a list in pairs. It would require steady work for at least tw

ummers to replace the lost moths. When she left the Bird Woman he went to the president of the Onabasha schools and asked him o do all in his power to secure her a room in one of the ward uildings.

The next morning the last moth was mounted, and the house-ork finished. Elnora said to her mother, "If you don't mind, I elieve I will go into the woods pasture beside Sleepy Snake Creek nd see if I can catch some dragonflies or moths."

"Wait until I get a knife and a pail and I will go along," nswered Mrs. Comstock. "The dandelions are plenty tender for reens among the deep grasses, and I might just happen to see omething myself. My eyes are pretty sharp."

"I wish you could realize how young you are," said Elnora. "I now women in Onabasha who are ten years older than you, yet ney look twenty years younger. So could you, if you would dress our hair becomingly, and wear appropriate clothes."

"I think my hair puts me in the old woman class permanently," aid Mrs. Comstock.

"Well, it doesn't!" cried Elnora. "There is a woman of twenty-ight who has hair as white as yours from sick headaches, but her ace is young and beautiful. If your face would grow a little fuller nd those lines would go away, you'd be lovely!"

"You little pig!" laughed Mrs. Comstock. "Anyone would hink you would be satisfied with having a splinter new mother, ithout setting up a kick on her looks, first thing. Greedy!"

"That is a good word," said Elnora. "I admit the charge. I m greedy over every wasted year. I want you young, lovely, uitably dressed and enjoying life like the other girls' mothers."

Mrs. Comstock laughed softly as she pushed back her sun-onnet so that shrubs and bushes beside the way could be scanned osely. Elnora walked ahead with a case over her shoulder, a net n her hand. Her head was bare, the rolling collar of her lavender ingham dress was cut in a V at the throat, the sleeves only eached the elbows. Every few steps she paused and examined the hrubbery carefully, while Mrs. Comstock was watching until her yes ached, but there were no dandelions in the pail she carried.

Early June was rioting in fresh grasses, bright flowers, bird

songs, and gay-winged creatures of air. Down the footpath th two went through the perfect morning, the love of God and a nature in their hearts. At last they reached the creek, followin it toward the bridge. Here Mrs. Comstock found a large bed tender dandelions and stopped to fill her pail. Then she sat on th bank, picking over the greens, while she listened to the creek soft singing its June song.

Elnora remained within calling distance, and was having goo success. At last she crossed the creek, following it up to a bridg There she began a careful examination of the under sides of th sleepers and flooring for cocoons. Mrs. Comstock could see h and the creek for several rods above. The mother sat beating th long green leaves across her hand, carefully picking out the whit buds, because Elnora liked them, when a splash up the cree attracted her attention.

Around the bend came a man. He was bareheaded, dressed in white sweater, and waders which reached his waist. He walke on the bank, only entering the water when forced. He had a quee basket strapped on his hip, and with a small rod he sent a long lin spinning before him down the creek, deftly manipulating with a little floating object. He was closer Elnora than her mother, bu Mrs. Comstock thought possibly by hurrying she could remain un seen and yet warn the girl that a stranger was coming. As sh approached the bridge, she caught a sapling and leaned over th water to call Elnora. With her lips parted to speak she hesitate a second to watch a sort of insect that flashed past on the wate when a splash from the man attracted the girl.

She was under the bridge, one knee planted in the embank ment and a foot braced to support her. Her hair was tousled b wind and bushes, her face flushed, and she lifted her arms abov her head, working to loosen a cocoon she had found. The ca Mrs. Comstock had intended to utter never found voice, for a Elnora looked down at the sound, "Possibly I could get that fo you," suggested the man.

Mrs. Comstock drew back. He was a young man with a won derfully attractive face, although it was too white for robu health, broad shoulders, and slender, upright frame.

"Oh, I do hope you can!" answered Elnora. "It's quite a find! 's one of those lovely pale red cocoons described in the books. suspect it comes from having been in a dark place and screened om the weather."

"Is that so?" cried the man. "Wait a minute. I've never seen ie. I suppose it's a Cecropia, from the location."

"Of course," said Elnora. "It's so cool here the moth hasn't nerged. The cocoon is a big, baggy one, and it is as red as fox il."

"What luck!" he cried. "Are you making a collection?"

He reeled in his line, laid his rod across a bush and climbed ie embankment to Elnora's side, produced a knife and began ie work of whittling a deep groove around the cocoon.

"Yes. I paid my way through the high school in Onabasha with iem. Now I am starting a collection which means college."

"Onabasha!" said the man. "That is where I am visiting. ossibly you know my people—Dr. Ammon's? The doctor is my ncle. My home is in Chicago. I've been having typhoid fever, mething fierce. In the hospital six weeks. Didn't gain strength ght, so Uncle Doc sent for me. I am to live out of doors all mmer, and exercise until I get in condition again. Do you know y uncle?"

"Yes. He is Aunt Margaret's doctor, and he would be ours, nly we are never ill."

"Well, you look it!" said the man, appraising Elnora at a ance.

"Strangers always mention it," sighed Elnora. "I wonder how would seem to be a pale, languid lady and ride in a carriage."

"Ask me!" laughed the man. "It feels like the—dickens! I'm proud of my feet. It's quite a trick to stand on them now. have to keep out of the water all I can and stop to baby every alf-mile. But with interesting outdoor work I'll be myself in week."

"Do you call that work?" Elnora indicated the creek.

"I do, indeed! Nearly three miles, banks too soft to brag on nd never a strike. Wouldn't you call that hard labor?"

"Yes," laughed Elnora. "Work at which you might kill your-

self and never get a fish. Did anyone tell you there were trout i
Sleepy Snake Creek?"

"Uncle said I could try."

"Oh, you can," said Elnora. "You can try no end, but you
never get a trout. This is too far south and too warm for them.
you sit on the bank and use worms you might catch some perc
or catfish."

"But that isn't exercise."

"Well, if you only want exercise, go right on fishing. You wi
have a creel full of invisible results every night."

"I object," said the man emphatically. He stopped work agai
and studied Elnora. Even the watching mother could not blam
him. In the shade of the bridge Elnora's bright head and he
lavender dress made a picture worthy of much contemplation.

"I object!" repeated the man. "When I work I want to se
results. I'd rather exercise sawing wood, making one pile gro
little and the other big, than to cast all day and catch nothin
because there is not a fish to take. Work for work's sake doesn
appeal to me."

He digged the groove around the cocoon with skilled hand
"Now there is some fun in this!" he said. "It's going to be a fa
job to cut it out, but when it comes, it is not only beautiful, bu
worth a price; it will help you on your way. I think I'll put up m
rod and hunt moths. That would be something like! Don't yo
want help?"

Elnora parried the question. "Have you ever hunted moth
Mr. Ammon?"

"Enough to know the ropes in taking them and to distinguis
the commonest ones. I go wild on Catocalæ. There's too man
of them, all too much alike for Philip, but I know all these fellow
One flew into my room when I was about ten years old, and w
thought it a miracle. None of us ever had seen one so we took
over to the museum to Dr. Dorsey. He said they were commo
enough, but we didn't see them because they flew at night. H
showed me the museum collection, and I was so interested I too
mine back home and started to hunt them. Every year after tha
we went to our cottage a month earlier, so I could find them, an

ll my family helped. I stuck to it until I went to college. Then, eeping the little moths out of the big ones was too much for ne mater, so father advised that I donate mine to the museum. Ie bought a fine case for them with my name on it, which con- itutes my sole contribution to science. I know enough to help you ll right."

"Aren't you going north this year?"

"All depends on how this fever leaves me. Uncle says the nights re too cold and the days too hot there for me. He thinks I had etter stay in an even temperature until I am strong again. I am oing to stick pretty close to him until I know I am. I wouldn't dmit it to anyone at home, but I was almost gone. I don't believe nything can eat up nerve much faster than the burning of a ow fever. No, thanks, I have enough. I stay with Uncle Doc, so I feel it coming again he can do something quickly."

"I don't blame you," said Elnora. "I never have been sick, ut it must be dreadful. I am afraid you are tiring yourself over nat. Let me take the knife awhile."

"Oh, it isn't so bad as that! I wouldn't be wading creeks if it vere. I only need a few more days to get steady on my feet again. 'll soon have this out."

"It is kind of you to get it," said Elnora. "I should have had o peel it, which would spoil the cocoon for a specimen and ruin he moth."

"You haven't said yet whether I may help you while I am ere."

Elnora hesitated.

"You better say 'yes,' " he persisted. "It would be a real kind- ess. It would keep me outdoors all day and give an incentive to vork. I'm good at it. I'll show you if I am not in a week or so. I an 'sugar,' manipulate lights, and mirrors, and all the expert nethods. I'll wager moths are numerous in the old swamp over here."

"They are," said Elnora. "Most I have I took there. A few ights ago my mother caught a number, but we don't dare go lone."

"All the more reason why you need me. Where do you live?

I can't get an answer from you, I'll go tell your mother who I a and ask her if I may help you. I warn you, young lady, I ha a very effective way with mothers. They almost never turn n down."

"Then it's probable you will have a new experience when yo meet mine," said Elnora. "She never was known to do what an one expected she surely would."

The cocoon came loose. Philip Ammon stepped down the em bankment turning to offer his hand to Elnora. She ran down she would have done alone, and taking the cocoon turned it en for end to learn if the imago it contained were alive. The Ammon took back the cocoon to smooth the edges. Mrs. Com stock gave them one long look as they stood there, and returne to her dandelions. While she worked she paused occasionally, listen ing intently. Presently they came down the creek, the man carryin the cocoon as if it were a jewel, while Elnora made her way alon the bank, taking a lesson in casting. Her face was flushed wit excitement, her eyes shining, the bushes taking liberties with he hair. For a picture of perfect loveliness she scarcely could hav been surpassed, and the eyes of Philip Ammon seemed to be i working order.

"Moth-er!" called Elnora.

There was an undulant, caressing sweetness in the girl's voic as she sang out the call in perfect confidence that it would bring loving answer, that struck deep in Mrs. Comstock's heart. Sh never had heard that word so pronounced before and a lum arose in her throat.

"Here!" she answered, still cleaning dandelions.

"Mother, this is Mr. Philip Ammon, of Chicago," said Elnora "He has been ill and he is staying with Dr. Ammon in Onabasha He came down the creek fishing and cut this cocoon from unde the bridge for me. He feels that it would be better to hunt moth than to fish, until he is well. What do you think about it?"

Philip Ammon extended his hand. "I am glad to know you," he said.

"You may take the hand-shaking for granted," replied Mrs Comstock. "Dandelions have a way of making the fingers sticky

nd I like to know a man before I take his hand, anyway. That ntroduction seems mighty comprehensive on your part, but it still eaves me unclassified. My name is Comstock."

Philip Ammon bowed.

"I am sorry to hear you have been sick," said Mrs. Comstock. But if people will live where they have such vile water as they do n Chicago, I don't see what else they are to expect."

Philip studied her intently.

"I am sure I didn't have a fever on purpose," he said.

"You do seem a little wobbly on your legs," she observed. Maybe you had better sit and rest while I finish these greens. t's late for the genuine article, but in the shade, among long rass they are still tender."

"May I have a leaf?" he asked, reaching for one as he sat on he bank, looking from the little creek at his feet, away through he dim cool spaces of the June forest on the opposite side. He drew a deep breath. "Glory, but this is good after almost two nonths inside hospital walls!"

He stretched on the grass and lay gazing up at the leaves, occasionally asking the interpretation of a bird note or the origin of an unfamiliar forest voice. Elnora began helping with the dandelions.

"Another, please," said the young man, holding out his hand.

"Do you suppose this is the kind of grass Nebuchadnezzar ate?" Elnora asked, giving the leaf.

"He knew a good thing if it is."

"Oh, you should taste dandelions boiled with bacon and served with mother's cornbread."

"Don't! My appetite is twice my size now. While it is—how far is it to Onabasha, shortest cut?"

"Three miles."

The man lay in perfect content, nibbling leaves.

"This surely is a treat," he said. "No wonder you find good hunting here. There seems to be foliage for almost every kind of caterpillar. But I suppose you have to exchange for northern species and Pacific Coast kinds?"

"Yes. And everyone wants Regalis in trade. I never saw the

like. They consider a Cecropia or a Polyphemus an insult, and Luna is barely acceptable."

"What authorities have you?"

Elnora began to name textbooks which started a discussion Mrs. Comstock listened. She cleaned dandelions with greater delib eration than they ever before were examined. In reality she wa taking stock of the young man's long, well-proportioned frame his strong hands, his smooth, fine-textured skin, his thick shock o dark hair, and making mental notes of his simple manly speech and the fact that he evidently did know much about moths. I pleased her to think that if he had been a neighbor boy who had lain beside her every day of his life while she worked, he could have been no more at home. She liked the things he said, but sh was proud that Elnora had a ready answer which always seemed appropriate.

At last Mrs. Comstock finished the greens.

"You are three miles from the city and less than a mile from where we live," she said. "If you will tell me what you dare eat I suspect you had best go home with us and rest until the coo of the day before you start back. Probably someone that you can ride in with will be passing before evening."

"That is mighty kind of you," said Philip. "I think I will. I doesn't matter so much what I eat, the point is that I must be moderate. I am hungry all the time."

"Then we will go," said Mrs. Comstock, "and we will no allow you to make yourself sick with us."

Philip Ammon arose: picking up the pail of greens and his fish ing rod, he stood waiting. Elnora led the way. Mrs. Comstock motioned Philip to follow and she walked in the rear. The gir carried the cocoon and the box of moths she had taken, searching every step for more. The young man frequently set down his load to join in the pursuit of a dragonfly or moth, while Mrs. Com- stock watched the proceedings with sharp eyes. Every time Philip picked up the pail of greens she struggled to suppress a smile.

Elnora proceeded slowly, chattering about everything beside the trail. Philip was interested in all the objects she pointed out, noticing several things which escaped her. He carried the greens

s casually when they took a short cut down the roadway as on he trail. When Elnora turned toward the gate of her home Philip mmon stopped, took a long look at the big hewed log cabin, the ines which clambered over it, the flower garden ablaze with beds f bright bloom interspersed with strawberries and tomatoes, the rees of the forest rising north and west like a green wall and xclaimed: "How beautiful!"

Mrs. Comstock was pleased. "If you think that," she said, "perhaps you will understand how, in all this present-day rush to be nodern, I have preferred to remain as I began. My husband and took up this land, and enough trees to build the cabin, stable, nd outbuildings are nearly all we ever cut. Of course, if he had ved, I suppose we should have kept up with our neighbors. hear considerable about the value of the land, the trees which re on it, and the oil which is supposed to be under it, but as yet haven't brought myself to change anything. So we stand for one f the few remaining homes of first settlers in this region. Come n. You are very welcome to what we have."

Mrs. Comstock stepped forward and took the lead. She had a owl of soft water and a pair of boots to offer for the heavy waders, or outer comfort, a glass of cold buttermilk and a bench on which o rest, in the circular arbor until dinner was ready. Philip Ammon splashed in the water. He followed to the stable and exhanged boots there. He was ravenous for the buttermilk, and vhen he stretched on the bench in the arbor the flickering patches of sunlight so tantalized his tired eyes, while the bees nade such splendid music, he was soon sound asleep.

When Elnora and her mother came out with a table they tood a short time looking at him. It is probable Mrs. Comstock voiced a united thought when she said: "What a refined, decent-looking young man! How proud his mother must be of him! We must be careful what we let him eat."

Then they returned to the kitchen where Mrs. Comstock proceeded to be careful. She broiled ham of her own sugar-curing reamed potatoes, served asparagus on toast, and made a delicious strawberry shortcake. As she cooked dandelions with bacon, she feared to serve them to him, so she made an excuse

that it took too long to prepare them, blanched some and mad a salad. When everything was ready she touched Philip's sleev

"Best have something to eat, lad, before you get too hungry, she said.

"Please hurry!" he begged laughingly as he held a pla toward her to be filled. "I thought I had enough self-restrai to start out alone, but I see I was mistaken. If you would allo me, just now, I am afraid I should start a fever again. I nev did smell food so good as this. It's mighty kind of you to tak me in. I hope I will be man enough in a few days to do som thing worth while in return."

Spots of sunshine fell on the white cloth and blue china, th bees and an occasional stray butterfly came searching for foo A rose-breasted grosbeak, released from a three hours' siege o brooding, while his independent mate took her bath and recrea tion, mounted the top branch of a maple in the west woods fro which he serenaded the dinner party with a joyful chorus i celebration of his freedom. Philip's eyes strayed to the beautifu cabin, to the mixture of flowers and vegetables stretching dow to the road, and to the singing bird with his red-splotched brea of white and he said: "I can't realize now that I ever lay in ic packs in a hospital. How I wish all the sick folks could com here to grow strong!"

The grosbeak sang on, a big Turnus butterfly sailed throug the arbor and poised over the table. Elnora held up a lum of sugar and the butterfly, clinging to her fingers, tasted daintily With eager eyes and parted lips, the girl held steadily. When a last it wavered away, "That made a picture!" said Philip. "As me some other time how I lost my illusions concerning butter flies. I always thought of them in connection with sunshine flower pollen, and fruit nectar, until one sad day."

"I know!" laughed Elnora. "I've seen that, too, but it didn' destroy any illusion for me. I think quite as much of the but terflies as ever."

Then they talked of flowers, moths, dragonflies, Indian relics and all the natural wonders the swamp afforded, straying fro those subjects to books and school work. When they cleared th

ible Philip assisted, carrying several tray loads to the kitchen. He nd Elnora mounted specimens while Mrs. Comstock washed the ishes. Then she came out with a ruffle she was embroidering.

"I wonder if I did not see a picture of you in Onabasha, last ight," Philip said to Elnora. "Aunt Anna took me to call on Miss Brownlee. She was showing me her crowd—of course, it as you! But it didn't half do you justice, although it was the earest human of any of them. Miss Brownlee is very fond of ou. She said the finest things."

Then they talked of Commencement, and at last Philip said e must go or his friends would become anxious about him.

Mrs. Comstock brought him a blue bowl of creamy milk and plate of bread. She stopped a passing team and secured a ride o the city for him, as his exercise of the morning had been too iolent, and he was forced to admit he was tired.

"May I come tomorrow afternoon and hunt moths awhile?" e asked Mrs. Comstock as he arose. "We will 'sugar' a tree and ut a light beside it, if I can get stuff to make the preparation. Possibly we can take some that way. I always enjoy moth hunting, I'd like to help Miss Elnora, and it would be a charity to me. I've got to remain outdoors some place, and I'm quite sure 'd get well faster here than anywhere else. Please say I may ome."

"I have no objections, if Elnora really would like help," said Mrs. Comstock.

In her heart she wished he would not come. She wanted her newly found treasure all to herself, for a time, at least. But Elnora's were eager, shining eyes. She thought it would be splendid to have help, and great fun to try book methods for taking moths, so it was arranged. As Philip rode away, Mrs. Comstock's eyes followed him. "What a nice young man!" she said.

"He seems fine," agreed Elnora.

"He comes of a good family, too. I've often heard of his father. He is a great lawyer."

"I am glad he likes it here. I need help. Possibly——"

"Possibly what?"

"We can find many moths."

"What did he mean about the butterflies?"

"That he always had connected them with sunshine, flower and fruits, and thought of them as the most exquisite of crea tions; then one day he found some clustering thickly over ca rion."

"Come to think of it, I have seen butterflies——"

"So had he," laughed Elnora. "And that is what he meant.

CHAPTER XIV

Wherein a New Position Is Tendered Elnora, and Philip Ammon Is Shown Limberlost Violets

The next morning Mrs. Comstock called to Elnora, "The mail carrier stopped at our box."

Elnora ran down the walk and came back carrying an official letter. She tore it open and read:

My dear Miss Comstock:

At the weekly meeting of the Onabasha School Board last night, it was decided to add the position of Lecturer on Natural History to our corps of city teachers. It will be the duty of this person to spend two hours a week in each of the grade schools exhibiting and explaining specimens of the most prominent objects in nature: animals, birds, insects, flowers, vines, shrubs, bushes, and trees. These specimens and lectures should be appropriate to the seasons and the comprehension of the grades. This position was unanimously voted to you. I think you will find the work delightful and much easier than the routine grind of the other teachers. It is my advice that you accept and begin to prepare yourself at once. Your salary will be $750 a year, and you will be allowed $200 for expenses in procuring specimens and books. Let us know at once if you want the position, as it is going to be difficult to fill satisfactorily if you do not.

Very truly yours,
David Thompson, President, Onabasha Schools.

"I hardly understand," marveled Mrs. Comstock.

"It is a new position. They never have had anything like it

before. I suspect it arose from the help I've been giving th grade teachers in their nature work. They are trying to teach th children something, and half the instructors don't know a blu jay from a king-fisher, a beech leaf from an elm, or a wasp fro a hornet."

"Well, do you?" anxiously inquired Mrs. Comstock.

"Indeed, I do!" laughed Elnora, "and several other thing beside. When Freckles bequeathed me the swamp, he gave m a bigger inheritance than he knew. While you have thought was wandering aimlessly, I have been following a definite plan studying hard, and storing up the stuff that will earn thes seven hundred and fifty dollars. Mother dear, I am going t accept this, of course. The work will be a delight. I'd love most of anything in teaching. You must help me. We must fin nests, eggs, leaves, queer formations in plants and rare flowers I must have flower boxes made for each of the rooms and fille with wild things. I should begin to gather specimens this ver day."

Elnora's face was flushed and her eyes bright.

"Oh, what great work that will be!" she cried. "You mus go with me so you can see the little faces when I tell them hov the goldfinch builds its nest, and how the bees make honey."

So Elnora and her mother went into the woods behind th cabin to study nature.

"I think," said Elnora, "the idea is to begin with fall thing in the fall, keeping to the seasons throughout the year."

"What are fall things?" inquired Mrs. Comstock.

"Oh, fringed gentians, asters, ironwort, every fall flower leaves from every tree and vine, what makes them change color abandoned bird nests, winter quarters of caterpillars and insects what becomes of the butterflies and grasshoppers—myriads o stuff. I shall have to be very wise to select the things it will b most beneficial for the children to learn."

"Can I really help you?" Mrs. Comstock's strong face wa pathetic.

"Indeed, yes!" cried Elnora. "I never can get through i

lone. There will be an immense amount of work connected ith securing and preparing specimens."

Mrs. Comstock lifted her head proudly and began doing usiness at once. Her sharp eyes ranged from earth to heaven. he investigated everything, asking innumerable questions. At oon Mrs. Comstock took the specimens they had collected, and ent to prepare dinner, while Elnora followed the woods down the Sintons' to show her letter.

She had to explain what became of her moths, and why col-ge would have to be abandoned for that year, but Margaret nd Wesley vowed not to tell. Wesley waved the letter excitedly, xplaining it to Margaret as if it were a personal possession. Iargaret was deeply impressed, while Billy volunteered first d in gathering material.

"Now anything you want in the ground, Snap can dig it out," e said. "Uncle Wesley and I found a hole three times as big Snap, that he dug at the roots of a tree."

"We will train him to hunt pupæ cases," said Elnora.

"Are you going to the woods this afternoon?" asked Billy.

"Yes," answered Elnora. "Dr. Ammon's nephew from Chi-go is visiting in Onabasha. He is going to show me how men ut some sort of compound on a tree, hang a light beside it, nd take moths that way. It will be interesting to watch and arn."

"May I come?" asked Billy.

"Of course you may come!" answered Elnora.

"Is this nephew of Dr. Ammon a young man?" inquired Iargaret.

"About twenty-six, I should think," said Elnora. "He said he ad been out of college and at work in his father's law office ree years."

"Does he seem nice?" asked Margaret, and Wesley smiled.

"Finest kind of a person," said Elnora. "He can teach me so uch. It is very interesting to hear him talk. He knows consid-able about moths that will be a help to me. He had a fever and e has to stay outdoors until he grows strong again."

"Billy, I guess you better help me this afternoon," said Ma
garet. "Maybe Elnora had rather not bother with you."

"There is no reason on earth why Billy should not come
cried Elnora, and Wesley smiled again.

"I must hurry home or I won't be ready," she added.

Hastening down the road she entered the cabin, her fa
glowing.

"I thought you never would come," said Mrs. Comstock. "
you don't hurry Mr. Ammon will be here before you a
dressed."

"I forgot about him until just now," said Elnora. "I am n
going to dress. He's not coming to visit. We are only going to t
woods for more specimens. I can't wear anything that requir
care. The limbs take the most dreadful liberties with hair ar
clothing."

Mrs. Comstock opened her lips, looked at Elnora and clos
them. In her heart she was pleased that the girl was so inte
ested in her work that she had forgotten Philip Ammon's cor
ing. But it did seem to her that such a pleasant young ma
should have been greeted by a girl in a fresh dress. "If she isn
disposed to primp at the coming of a man, heaven forbid that
should be the one to start her," thought Mrs. Comstock.

Philip came whistling down the walk between the cinnamo
pinks, pansies, and strawberries. He carried several package
while his face flushed with more color than on the previous da

"Only see what has happened to me!" cried Elnora, offerin
her letter.

"I'll wager I know!" answered Philip. "Isn't it great! Ever
one in Onabasha is talking about it. At last there is something ne
under the sun. All of them are pleased. They think you'll mal
a big success. This will give an incentive to work. In a few da
more I'll be myself again, and we'll overturn the fields an
woods around here."

He went on to congratulate Mrs. Comstock.

"Aren't you proud of her, though?" he asked. "You shou
hear what folks are saying! They say she created the necessity f
the position, and everyone seems to feel that it is a necessity. No

f she succeeds, and she will, all of the other city schools will have uch departments, and first thing you know she will have made he whole world a little better. Let me rest a few seconds; my feet re acting up again. Then we will cook the moth compound and ut it to cool."

He laughed as he sat breathing shortly.

"It doesn't seem possible that a fellow could lose his strength ke this. My knees are actually trembling, but I'll be all right in minute. Uncle Doc said I could come. I told him how you ook care of me, and he said I would be safe here."

Then he began unwrapping packages and explaining to Mrs. Comstock how to cook the compound to attract the moths. He ollowed her into the kitchen, kindled the fire, and stirred the reparation as he talked. While the mixture cooled, he and El-ora walked through the vegetable garden behind the cabin and trayed from there into the woods.

"What about college?" he asked. "Miss Brownlee said you ere going."

"I had hoped to," replied Elnora, "but I had a streak of dread-ul luck, so I'll have to wait until next year. If you won't speak of , I'll tell you."

Philip promised, so Elnora recited the history of the Yellow mperor. She was so interested in doing the Emperor justice she id not notice how many personalities went into the story. A few ertinent questions told him the remainder. He looked at the irl in wonder. In face and form she was as lovely as anyone of er age and type he ever had seen. Her school work far surpassed hat of most girls of her age he knew. She differed in other ways. his vast store of learning she had gathered from field and forest as a wealth of attraction no other girl possessed. Her frank, natter-of-fact manner was an inheritance from her mother, but here was something more. Once, as they talked he thought "sym-athy" was the word to describe it and again "comprehension." he seemed to possess a large sense of brotherhood for all human nd animate creatures. She spoke to him as if she had known him l her life. She talked to the grosbeak in exactly the same man-er, as she laid strawberries and potato bugs on the fence for his

family. She did not swerve an inch from her way when a sna slid past her, while the squirrels came down from the trees a took corn from her fingers. She might as well have been a boy, lacking was she in any touch of feminine coquetry toward hi He studied her wonderingly. As they went along the path th reached a large slime-covered pool surrounded by decayi stumps and logs thickly covered with water hyacinths and bl flags. Philip stopped.

"Is that the place?" he asked.

Elnora assented. "The doctor told you?"

"Yes. It was tragic. Is that pool really bottomless?"

"So far as we ever have been able to discover."

Philip stood looking at the water, while the long, sweet grass thickly sprinkled with blue flag bloom, over which wild b clambered, swayed around his feet. Then he turned to the g She had worked hard. The same lavender dress she had wo the previous day clung to her in limp condition. But she was evenly colored and of as fine grain as a wild rose petal, her h was really brown, but never was such hair touched with a redd glory, while her heavy arching brows added a look of strength her big gray-blue eyes.

"And you were born here?"

He had not intended to voice that thought.

"Yes," she said, looking into his eyes. "Just in time to preve my mother from saving the life of my father. She came near nev forgiving me."

"Ah, cruel!" cried Philip.

"I find much in life that is cruel, from our standpoints," sa Elnora. "It takes the large wisdom of the Unfathomable, t philosophy of the Almighty, to endure some of it. But there always right somewhere, and at last it seems to come."

"Will it come to you?" asked Philip, who found himself deep affected.

"It has come," said the girl serenely. "It came a week ago. came in fullest measure when my mother ceased to regret tha had been born. Now, work that I love has come—that shou

onstitute happiness. A little farther along is my violet bed. I want ou to see it."

As Philip Ammon followed he definitely settled upon the name f the unusual feature of Elnora's face. It should be called "ex- erience." She had known bitter experiences early in life. Suffer- ng had been her familiar more than joy. He watched her arnestly, his heart deeply moved. She led him into a swampy alf-open space in the woods, stopped and stepped aside. He ttered a cry of surprised delight.

A few decaying logs were scattered around, the grass grew in ufts long and fine. Blue flags waved, clusters of cowslips nodded old heads, but the whole earth was purple with a thick blanket f violets nodding from stems a foot in length. Elnora knelt and ipping her fingers between the leaves and grasses to the roots, athered a few violets and gave them to Philip.

"Can your city greenhouses surpass them?" she asked.

He sat on a log to examine the blooms.

"They are superb!" he said. "I never saw such length of stem r such rank leaves, while the flowers are the deepest blue, the ruest violet I ever saw growing wild. They are colored exactly ke the eyes of the girl I am going to marry."

Elnora handed him several others to add to those he held. "She ust have wonderful eyes," she commented.

"No other blue eyes are quite so beautiful," he said. "In fact, ne is altogether lovely."

"Is it customary for a man to think the girl he is going to arry lovely? I wonder if I should find her so."

"You would," said Philip. "No one ever fails to. She is tall as ou, very slender, but perfectly rounded; you know about her yes; her hair is black and wavy—while her complexion is clear nd flushed with red."

"Why, she must be the most beautiful girl in the whole world!" ne cried.

"No, indeed!" he said. "She is not a particle better looking in er way than you are in yours. She is a type of dark beauty, but ou are equally as perfect. She is unusual in her combination of

black hair and violet eyes, although everyone thinks them bla at a little distance. You are quite as unusual with your fair fac black brows, and brown hair; indeed, I know many people wh would prefer your bright head to her dark one. It's all a questi of taste—and being engaged to the girl," he added.

"That would be likely to prejudice one," laughed Elnora.

"Edith has a birthday soon; if these last will you let me have box of them to send her?"

"I will help gather and pack them for you, so they will car nicely. Does she hunt moths with you?"

Back went Philip Ammon's head in a gale of laughter.

"No!" he cried. "She says they are 'creepy.' She would go in a spasm if she were compelled to touch those caterpillars I sa you handling yesterday."

"Why would she?" marveled Elnora. "Haven't you told h that they are perfectly clean, helpless, and harmless as so muc animate velvet?"

"No, I have not told her. She wouldn't care enough abo caterpillars to listen."

"In what is she interested?"

"What interests Edith Carr? Let me think! First, I believe sh takes pride in being a little handsomer and better dressed tha any girl of her set. She is interested in having a beautiful hom fine appointments, in being petted, praised, and the acknowledg leader of society. She likes to find new things which amuse he and to always and in all circumstances have her own way abo everything."

"Good gracious!" cried Elnora, staring at him. "But wh does she do? How does she spend her time?"

"Spend her time!" repeated Philip. "Well, she would call th a joke. Her days are never long enough. There is endless sho ping, to find the pretty things; regular visits to the dressmake calls, parties, theaters, entertainments. She is always rushed. never am able to be with her half as much as I would like."

"But I mean work," persisted Elnora. "In what is she inte ested that is useful to the world?"

"Me!" cried Philip promptly.

"I can understand that," laughed Elnora. "What I can't understand is how you can be in——" She stopped in confusion, but she saw that he had finished the sentence as she had intended. "I beg your pardon!" she cried. "I didn't intend to say that. But I cannot understand these people I hear about who live only for their own amusement. Perhaps it is very great; I'll never have a chance to know. To me, it seems the only pleasure in this world worth having is the joy we derive from living for those we love, and those we can help. I hope you are not angry with me."

Philip sat silently looking far away, with deep thought in his eyes.

"You are angry," faltered Elnora.

His look came back to her as she knelt before him among the flowers and he gazed at her steadily.

"No doubt I should be," he said, "but the fact is I am not. I cannot understand a life purely for personal pleasure myself. But she is only a girl, and this is her playtime. When she is a woman in her own home, then she will be different, will she not?"

Elnora never resembled her mother so closely as when she answered that question.

"I would have to be well acquainted with her to know, but I should hope so. To make a real home for a tired business man is a very different kind of work from that required to be a leader of society. It demands different talent and education. Of course, she means to change, or she would not have promised to make a home for you. I suspect our dope is cool now, let's go try for some butterflies."

As they went along the path together Elnora talked of many things but Philip answered absently. Evidently he was thinking of something else. But the moth bait recalled him and he was ready for work as they made their way back to the woods. He wanted to try the Limberlost but Elnora was firm about remaining on home ground. She did not tell him that lights hung in the swamp would be a signal to call up a band of men whose presence she dreaded. So they started, Ammon carrying the dope, Elnora the net, Billy and Mrs. Comstock following with cyanide boxes and lanterns.

First they tried for butterflies and captured several fine o without trouble. They also called swarms of ants, bees, beet and flies. When it grew dusk, Mrs. Comstock and Philip went prepare supper. Elnora and Billy remained until the butterf disappeared. Then they lighted the lanterns, repainted the tr and followed the home trail.

"Do you 'spec you'll get just a lot of moths?" asked Billy, as walked beside Elnora.

"I am sure I hardly know," said the girl. "This is a new w for me. Perhaps they will come to the lights, but few moths e and I have some doubt about those which the lights attr settling on the right trees. Maybe the smell of that dope w draw them. Between us, Billy, I think I like my old way best. I can find a hidden moth, slip up and catch it unawares, or take in full flight, it's my captive, and I can keep it until it dies nat rally. But this way you seem to get it under false pretences, it h no chance, and it will probably ruin its wings struggling for fr dom before morning."

"Well, any moth ought to be proud to be taken anyway, you," said Billy. "Just look what you do! You can make ever body love them. People even quit hating caterpillars when th see you handle them and hear you tell all about them. You mu have some to show people how they are. It's not like killing thin to see if you can, or because you want to eat them, the way mo men kill birds. I think it is right for you to take enough for co lections, to show city people, and to illustrate the Bird Woman books. You go on and take them! The moths don't care. They' glad to have you. They like it!"

"Billy, I see your future," said Elnora. "We will educate yo and send you up to Mr. Ammon to make a great lawyer. You beat the world as a special pleader. You actually make me fe that I am doing the moths a kindness to take them."

"And so you are!" cried Billy. "Why, just from what you hav taught them Uncle Wesley and Aunt Margaret never think killing a caterpillar until they look whether it's the beautiful Jun moth kind, or the horrid tent ones. That's what you can do. Yo go straight ahead!"

"Billy, you are a jewel!" cried Elnora, throwing her arm across is shoulders as they came down the path.

"My, I was scared!" said Billy with a deep breath.

"Scared?" questioned Elnora.

"Yes sir-ee! Aunt Margaret scared me. May I ask you a ques-ion?"

"Of course you may!"

"Is that man going to be your beau?"

"Billy! No! What made you think such a thing?"

"Aunt Margaret said likely he would fall in love with you, and ou wouldn't want me around any more. Oh, but I was scared! It n't so, is it?"

"Indeed, no!"

"I am your beau, ain't I?"

"Surely you are!" said Elnora, tightening her arm.

"I do hope Aunt Kate has ginger cookies," said Billy with a ttle skip of delight.

CHAPTER XV

Wherein Mrs. Comstock Faces the Almighty, and Philip Ammon Writes a Letter

Mrs. Comstock and Elnora were finishing breakfast the fo
lowing morning when they heard a cheery whistle down t
road. Elnora with surprised eyes looked at her mother.

"Could that be Mr. Ammon?" she questioned.

"I did not expect him so soon," commented Mrs. Comstoc

It was sunrise, but the musician was Philip Ammon. He a
peared stronger than on yesterday.

"I hope I am not too early," he said. "I am consumed wi
anxiety to learn if we have made a catch. If we have, we shou
beat the birds to it. I promised Uncle Doc to put on my wade
and keep dry for a few days yet, when I go to the woods. Le
hurry! I am afraid of crows. There might be a rare moth."

The sun was topping the Limberlost when they started. As the
neared the place Philip stopped.

"Now we must use great caution," he said. "The lights an
the odors always attract numbers that don't settle on the baite
trees. Every bush, shrub, and limb may hide a specimen w
want."

So they approached with much care.

"There is something, anyway!" cried Philip.

"There are moths! I can see them!" exulted Elnora.

"Those you see are fast enough. It's the ones for which yo
must search that will escape. The grasses are dripping, and

ave boots, so you look beside the path while I take the outside," ıggested Ammon.

Mrs. Comstock wanted to hunt moths, but she was timid bout making a wrong movement, so she wisely sat on a log and atched Philip and Elnora to learn how they proceeded. Back in ıe deep woods a hermit thrush was singing his chant to the sing sun. Orioles were sowing the pure, sweet air with notes of old, poured out while on the wing. The robins were only chirping ow, for their morning songs had awakened all the other birds an our ago. Scolding red-wings tilted on half the bushes. Excepting te species of haws, tree bloom was almost gone, but wild flow-s made the path border and all the wood floor a riot of color. lnora, born among such scenes, worked eagerly, but to the city ıan, recently from a hospital, they seemed too good to miss. He equently stooped to examine a flower face, paused to listen in-ently to the thrush or lifted his head to see the gold flash which ccompanied the oriole's trailing notes. So Elnora uttered the first y, as she softly lifted branches and peered among the grasses.

"My find!" she called. "Bring the box, mother!"

Philip came hurrying also. When they reached her she stood n the path holding a pair of moths. Her eyes were wide with xcitement, her cheeks pink, her red lips parted, and on the hand ıe held out to them clung a pair of delicate blue-green moths, ith white bodies, and touches of lavender and straw color. All round her lay flower-brocaded grasses, behind the deep green ackground of the forest, while the sun slowly sifted gold from eaven to burnish her hair. Mrs. Comstock heard a sharp breath ehind her.

"Oh, what a picture!" exulted Philip at her shoulder. "She is bsolutely and altogether lovely! I'd give a small fortune for that aithfully set on canvas!"

He picked the box from Mrs. Comstock's fingers and slowly dvanced with it. Elnora held down her hand and transferred ıe moths. Philip closed the box carefully, but the watching ıother saw that his eyes were following the girl's face. He was ot making the slightest attempt to conceal his admiration.

"I wonder if a woman ever did anything lovelier than to find

a pair of Luna moths on a forest path, early on a perfect Ju morning," he said to Mrs. Comstock, when he returned the b

She glanced at Elnora, who was intently searching the bush

"Look here, young man," said Mrs. Comstock. "You se to find that girl of mine about right."

"I could suggest no improvement," said Philip. "I never s a more attractive girl anywhere. She seems absolutely perfect me."

"Then suppose you don't start any scheme calculated to sp her!" proposed Mrs. Comstock dryly. "I don't think you can, that any man could, but I'm not taking any risks. You asked come here to help in this work. We are both glad to have you, you confine yourself to work; but it's the least you can do to lea us as you find us."

"I beg your pardon!" said Philip. "I intended no offence. I a mire her as I admire any perfect creation."

"And nothing in all this world spoils the average girl so quick and so surely," said Mrs. Comstock. She raised her voice. "E nora, fasten up that tag of hair over your left ear. These bush muss you so you remind me of a sheep poking its nose through hedge fence."

Mrs. Comstock started down the path toward the log agai when she reached it she called sharply: "Elnora, come here! believe I have found something myself."

The "something" was a Citheronia Regalis which had emerge from its case on the soft earth under the log. It climbed up th wood, its stout legs dragging a big pursy body, while it wild flapped tiny wings the size of a man's thumbnail. Elnora gav one look and a cry which brought Philip.

"That's the rarest moth in America!" he announced. "Mr Comstock, you've gone up head. You can put that in a box wit a screen cover tonight, and attract half a dozen, possibly."

"Is it rare, Elnora?" inquired Mrs. Comstock, as if no one els knew.

"It surely is," answered Elnora. "If we can find it a mate to night, it will lay from two hundred and fifty to three hundre eggs tomorrow. With any luck at all I can raise two hundre

aterpillars from them. I did once before. And they are worth dollar apiece."

"Was the one I killed like that?"

"No. That was a different moth, but its life processes were the me as this. The Bird Woman calls this the King of the Poets."

"Why does she?"

"Because it is named for Citheron who was a poet, and regalis fers to a king. You mustn't touch it or you may stunt wing delopment. You watch and don't let that moth out of sight, or nything touch it. When the wings are expanded and hardened e will put it in a box."

"I am afraid it will race itself to death," objected Mrs. Comock.

"That's a part of the game," said Philip. "It is starting circution now. When the right moment comes, it will stop and exand its wings. If you watch closely you can see them expand."

Presently the moth found a rough projection of bark and clung ith its feet, back down, its wings hanging. The body was an unsual orange red, the tiny wings were gray, striped with the red nd splotched here and there with markings of canary yellow. Irs. Comstock watched breathlessly. Presently she slipped from ie log and knelt to secure a better view.

"Are its wings developing?" called Elnora.

"They are growing larger and the markings coming stronger very minute."

"Let's watch, too," said Elnora to Philip.

They came and looked over Mrs. Comstock's shoulder. Lower rooped the gay wings, wider they spread, brighter grew the arkings as if laid off in geometrical patterns. They could hear Irs. Comstock's tense breath and see her absorbed expression.

"Young people," she said solemnly, "if your studying science nd the elements has ever led you to feel that things just hapen, kind of evolve by chance, as it were, this sight will be good or you. Maybe earth and air accumulate, but it takes the wisom of the Almighty God to devise the wing of a moth. If there ver was a miracle, this whole process is one. Now, as I underand it, this creature is going to keep on spreading those wings,

until they grow to size and harden to strength sufficient to be its body. Then it flies away, mates with its kind, lays its eggs the leaves of a certain tree, and the eggs hatch tiny caterpilla which eat just that kind of leaves, and the worms grow and gro and take on different forms and colors until at last they are b caterpillars six inches long, with large horns. Then they burro into the earth, build a water-proof house around themselves fro material which is inside them, and lie through rain and freezi cold for months. A year from egg laying they come out like th and begin the process all over again. They don't eat, they don see distinctly, they live but a few days, and fly only at nigh then they drop off easy, but the process goes on."

A shivering movement went over the moth. The wings droop and spread wider. Mrs. Comstock sank into soft awed tones.

"There never was a moment in my life," she said, "when I fe so in the Presence, as I do now. I feel as if the Almighty we so real, and so near, that I could reach out and touch Him, as could this wonderful work of His, if I dared. I feel like saying Him: 'To the extent of my brain power I realize Your presenc and all it is in me to comprehend of Your power. Help me learn, even this late, the lessons of Your wonderful creation Help me to unshackle and expand my soul to the fullest realiz tion of Your wonders. Almighty God, make me bigger, make m broader!' "

The moth climbed to the end of the projection, up it a litt way, then suddenly reversed its wings, turned the hidden sides ou and dropped them beside its abdomen, like a large fly. The upp side of the wings, thus exposed, was far richer color, more ex quisite texture than the under, and they slowly half lifted an drooped again. Mrs. Comstock turned her face to Philip.

"Am I an old fool, or do you feel it, too?" she half whispered

"You are wiser than you ever have been before," answere he. "I feel it, also."

"And I," breathed Elnora.

The moth spread its wings, shivered them tremulously, open ing and closing them rapidly. Philip handed the box to Elnora She shook her head.

"I can't take that one," she said. "Give her freedom."

"But, Elnora," protested Mrs. Comstock, "I don't want to let r go. She's mine. She's the first one I ever found this way. Can't u put her in a big box, and let her live without hurting her? I n't bear to let her go. I want to learn all about her."

"Then watch while we gather these on the trees," said Elnora. Ve will take her home until night and then decide what to do. ie won't fly for a long time yet."

Mrs. Comstock settled on the ground, gazing at the moth. nora and Philip went to the baited trees, placing several large oths and a number of smaller ones in the cyanide jar, and arching the bushes beyond where they found several paired ecimens of differing families. When they returned Elnora owed her mother how to hold her hand before the moth so at it would climb upon her fingers. Then they started back to e cabin, Elnora and Philip leading the way; Mrs. Comstock llowed slowly, stepping with great care lest she stumble and jure the moth. Her face wore a look of comprehension, in her es was an exalted light. On she came to the blue-bordered pool ng beside her path.

A turtle scrambled from a log and splashed into the water, nile a red-wing shouted, "O-ka-lee!" to her. Mrs. Comstock used and looked intently at the slime-covered quagmire, framed a flower riot and homed over by sweet-voiced birds. Then she zed at the thing of incomparable beauty clinging to her fingers d said softly: "If you had known about wonders like these in e days of your youth, Robert Comstock, could you ever have ne what you did?"

Elnora missed her mother, and turning to look for her, saw r standing beside the pool. Would the old fascination return? panic of fear seized the girl. She went back swiftly.

"Are you afraid she is going?" Elnora asked. "If you are, cup ur other hand over her for shelter. Carrying her through this and in the hot sunshine will dry her wings and make them ady for flight very quickly. You can't trust her in such air and ht as you can in the cool dark woods."

While she talked she took hold of her mother's sleeve, anxiously

smiling a pitiful little smile that Mrs. Comstock understoo
Philip set his load at the back door, returning to hold open th
garden gate for Elnora and Mrs. Comstock. He reached it i
time to see them standing together beside the pool. The moth
bent swiftly and kissed the girl on the lips. Philip turned and wa
busily hunting moths on the raspberry bushes when they reache
the gate. And so excellent are the rewards of attending your ow
business, that he found a Promethea on a lilac in a corner;
moth of such rare wine-colored, velvety shades that it almo
sent Mrs. Comstock to her knees again. But this one was full
developed, able to fly, and had to be taken into the cabin hu
riedly. Mrs. Comstock stood in the middle of the room holdin
up her Regalis.

"Now what must I do?" she asked.

Elnora glanced at Philip Ammon. Their eyes met and bot
of them smiled; he with amusement at the tall, spare figure, wit
dark eyes and white crown, asking the childish question s
confidingly; and Elnora with pride. She was beginning to appre
ciate the character of her mother.

"How would you like to sit and see her finish development
I'll get dinner," proposed the girl.

After they had dined, Philip and Elnora carried the dishes t
the kitchen, brought out boxes, sheets of cork, pins, ink, pape
slips and everything necessary for mounting and classifying th
moths they had taken. When the housework was finished Mr
Comstock with her ruffle sat near, watching and listening. Sh
remembered all they said that she understood, and when un
certain she asked questions. Occasionally she laid down her wor
to straighten some flower which needed attention or to search th
garden for a bug for the grosbeak. In one of these absences Elnor
said to Philip: "These replace quite a number of the moths I los
for the man of India. With a week of such luck, I could almos
begin to talk college again."

"There is no reason why you should not have the week and th
luck," said he. "I have taken moths until the middle of August
though I suspect one is more likely to find late ones in the nort
where it is colder than here. The next week is hay-time, but w

n count on a few double-brooders and strays, and by working e exchange method for all it is worth, I think we can complete e collection again."

"You almost make me hope," said Elnora, "but I must not ow myself. I don't truly think I can replace all I lost, not en with your help. If I could, I scarcely see my way clear to ave mother this winter. I have found her so recently, and she so precious, I can't risk losing her again. I am going to take e nature position in the Onabasha schools, and I shall be most ppy doing the work. Only, these are a temptation."

"I wish you might go to college this fall with the other girls," id Philip. "I feel that if you don't you never will. Isn't there me way?"

"I can't see it if there is, and I really don't want to leave other."

"Well, mother is mighty glad to hear it," said Mrs. Comstock, tering the arbor.

Philip noticed that her face was pale, her lips quivering, her ice cold.

"I was telling your daughter that she should go to college this nter," he explained, "but she says she doesn't want to leave u."

"If she wants to go, I wish she could," said Mrs. Comstock, look of relief spreading over her face.

"Oh, all girls want to go to college," said Philip. "It's the only oper place to learn bridge and embroidery; not to mention idnight lunches of mixed pickles and fruit cake, and all the de- hts of the sororities."

"I have thought for years of going to college," said Elnora, ut I never thought of any of those things."

"That is because your education in fudge and bridge has been dly neglected," said Philip. "You should hear my sister Polly! is was her final year! Lunches and sororities were all I heard r mention, until Tom Levering came on deck; now he is the ading subject. I can't see from her daily conversation that she ows half as much really worth knowing as you do, but she's ead of you miles on fun."

"Oh, we had some good times in the high school," said Elnora. "Life hasn't been all work and study. Is Edith Carr a college girl?"

"No. She is the very selectest kind of a private boarding-school girl."

"Who is she?" asked Mrs. Comstock.

Philip opened his lips.

"She is a girl in Chicago, that Mr. Ammon knows very well," said Elnora. "She is beautiful and rich, and a friend of his sister's. Or, didn't you say that?"

"I don't remember, but she is," said Philip. "This moth needs an alcohol bath to remove the dope."

"Won't the down come, too?" asked Elnora anxiously.

"No. You watch and you will see it come out, as Polly would say, 'a perfectly good' moth."

"Is your sister younger than you?" inquired Elnora.

"Yes," said Philip, "but she is three years older than you. She is the dearest sister in all the world. I'd love to see her now."

"Why don't you send for her," suggested Elnora. "Perhaps she'd like to help us catch moths."

"Yes, I think Polly in a Virot hat, Picot embroidered frock and three-inch heels would take more moths than anyone who ever tried the Limberlost," laughed Philip.

"Well, you find many of them, and you are her brother."

"Yes, but that is different. Father was reared in Onabasha and he loved the country. He trained me his way and mother took charge of Polly. I don't quite understand it. Mother is a great home body herself, but she did succeed in making Polly strictly ornamental."

"Does Tom Levering need a 'strictly ornamental' girl?"

"You are too matter of fact! Too 'strictly' material. He needs a darling girl who will love him plenty, and Polly is that."

"Well, then, does the Limberlost need a 'strictly ornamental' girl?"

"No!" cried Philip. "You are ornament enough for the Limberlost. I have changed my mind. I don't want Polly here. She would not enjoy catching moths, or anything we do."

"She might," persisted Elnora. "You are her brother, and urely you care for these things."

"The argument does not hold," said Philip. "Polly and I do ot like the same things when we are at home, but we are very ond of each other. The member of my family who would go razy about this is my father. I wish he could come, if only for week. I'd send for him, but he is tied up in preparing some apers for a great corporation case this summer. He likes the ountry. It was his vote that brought me here."

Philip leaned back against the arbor, watching the grosbeak as hunted food between a tomato vine and a day lily. Elnora set im to making labels, and when he finished them he asked per- ission to write a letter. He took no pains to conceal his page, and rom where she sat opposite him, Elnora could not look his way ithout reading: "My dearest Edith." He wrote busily for a time nd then sat staring across the garden.

"Have you run out of material so quickly?" asked Elnora.

"That's about it," said Philip. "I have said that I am getting ell as rapidly as possible, that the air is fine, the folks at Uncle oc's all well, and entirely too good to me; that I am spending ost of my time in the country helping catch moths for a collec- on, which is splendid exercise; now I can't think of another ing that will be interesting."

There was a burst of exquisite notes in the maple.

"Put in the grosbeak," suggested Elnora. "Tell her you are friendly with him you feed him potato bugs."

Philip lowered the pen to the sheet, bent forward, then hesi- ted.

"Blest if I do!" he cried. "She'd think a grosbeak was a de- raved person with a large nose. She'd never dream that it was a lack-robed lover, with a breast of snow and a crimson heart. She oesn't care for hungry babies and potato bugs. I shall write that father. He will find it delightful."

Elnora deftly picked up a moth, pinned it and placed its wings. he straightened the antennæ, drew each leg into position and t it in perfectly lifelike manner. As she lifted her work to see if

she had it right, she glanced at Philip. He was still frowning and hesitating over the paper.

"I dare you to let me dictate a couple of paragraphs."

"Done!" cried Philip. "Go slowly enough that I can write it."

Elnora laughed gleefully.

"I am writing this," she began, "in an old grape arbor in the country, near a log cabin where I had my dinner. From where I sit I can see directly into the home of the next-door neighbor on the west. His name is R. B. Grosbeak. From all I have seen of him, he is a gentleman of the old school; the oldest school there is, no doubt. He always wears a black suit and cap and a white vest, decorated with one large red heart, which I think must be the emblem of some ancient order. I have been here a number of times, and I never have seen him wear anything else, or his wife appear in other than a brown dress with touches of white.

"It has appealed to me at times that she was a shade neglectful of her home duties, but he does not seem to feel that way. He cheerfully stays in the sitting-room, while she is away having a good time, and sings while he cares for the four small children. I must tell you about his music. I am sure he never saw inside a conservatory. I think he merely picked up what he knows by ear and without vocal training, but there is a tenderness in his tones, a depth of pure melody, that I never have heard surpassed. It may be that I think more of his music than that of some other good vocalists hereabout, because I see more of him and appreciate his devotion to his home life.

"I just had an encounter with him at the west fence, and induced him to carry a small gift to his children. When I see the perfect harmony in which he lives, and the depth of content he and the brown lady find in life, I am almost persuaded to——

Now this is going to be poetry," said Elnora. "Move your pen over here and begin with a quote and a cap."

Philip's face had been an interesting study while he wrote her sentences. Now he gravely set the pen where she indicated, and Elnora dictated—

"Buy a nice little home in the country,
And settle down there for life."

"That's the truth!" cried Philip. "It's as big a temptation as I ever had. Go on!"

"That's all," said Elnora. "You can finish. The moths are done. I am going hunting for whatever I can find for the grades."

"Wait a minute," begged Philip. "I am going, too."

"No. You stay with mother and finish your letter."

"It is done. I couldn't add anything to that."

"Very well! Sign your name and come on. But I forgot to tell you all the bargain. Maybe you won't send the letter when you hear that. The remainder is that you show me the reply to my part of it."

"Oh, that's easy! I wouldn't have the slightest objection to showing you the whole letter."

He signed his name, folded the sheets and slipped them into his pocket.

"Where are we going and what do we take?"

"Will you go, mother?" asked Elnora.

"I have a little work that should be done," said Mrs. Comstock. "Could you spare me? Where do you want to go?"

"We will go down to Aunt Margaret's and see her a few minutes and get Billy. We will be back in time for supper."

Mrs. Comstock smiled as she watched them down the road. What a splendid-looking pair of young creatures they were! How finely proportioned, how full of vitality! Then her face grew troubled as she saw them in earnest conversation. Just as she was wishing she had not trusted her precious girl with so much of a stranger, she saw Elnora stoop to lift a branch and peer under. The mother grew content. Elnora was thinking only of her work. She was to be trusted utterly.

CHAPTER XVI

Wherein the Limberlost Sings for Philip, and the Talking Trees Tell Great Secrets

A FEW days later Philip handed Elnora a sheet of paper and she read: "In your condition I should think the moth hunting and life at that cabin would be very good for you, but for any sake keep away from that Grosbeak person, and don't come home with your head full of granger ideas. No doubt he has a remarkable voice, but I can't bear untrained singers, and don't you get the idea that a June song is perennial. You are not hearing the music he will make when the four babies have the scarlet fever and the measles, and the gadding wife leaves him at home to care for them then. Poor soul, I pity her! How she exists where rampant cows bellow at you, frogs croak, mosquitoes consume you, the butter goes to oil in summer and bricks in winter, while the pump freezes every day, and there is no earthly amusement, and no society! Poor things! Can't you influence him to move? No wonder she gads when she has a chance! I should die. If you are thinking of settling in the country, think also of a woman who is satisfied with white and brown to accompany you! Brown! Of all deadly colors! I should go mad in brown."

Elnora laughed while she read. Her face was dimpling, as she returned the sheet. "Who's ahead?" she asked.

"Who do you think?" he parried.

"She is," said Elnora. "Are you going to tell her in your next that R. B. Grosbeak is a bird, and that he probably will spend the winter in a wild plum thicket in Tennessee?"

"No," said Philip. "I shall tell her that I understand her ideas of life perfectly, and, of course, I never shall ask her to deal with oily butter and frozen pumps——"

"—and measley babies," interpolated Elnora.

"Exactly!" said Philip. "At the same time I find so much to counterbalance those things, that I should not object to bearing them myself, in view of the recompense. Where do we go and what do we do today?"

"We will have to hunt beside the roads and around the edge of the Limberlost today," said Elnora. "Mother is making strawberry preserves, and she can't come until she finishes. Suppose we go down to the swamp and I'll show you what is left of the flower-room that Terence O'More, the big lumber man of Great Rapids, made when he was a homeless boy here. Of course, you have heard the story?"

"Yes, and I've met the O'Mores who are frequently in Chicago society. They have friends there. I think them one ideal couple."

"That sounds as if they might be the only one," said Elnora, "and, indeed, they are not. I know dozens. Aunt Margaret and Uncle Wesley are another, the Brownlees another, and my mathematics professor and his wife. The world is full of happy people, but no one ever hears of them. You must fight and make a scandal to get into the papers. No one knows about all the happy people. I am happy myself, and look how perfectly inconspicuous I am."

"You only need go where you will be seen," began Philip, when he remembered and finished. "What do we take today?"

"Ourselves," said Elnora. "I have a vagabond streak in my blood and it's in evidence. I am going to show you where real flowers grow, real birds sing, and if I feel quite right about it, perhaps I shall raise a note or two myself."

"Oh, do you sing?" asked Philip politely.

"At times," answered Elnora. " 'As do the birds, because I must,' but don't be scared. The mood does not possess me often. Perhaps I shan't raise a note."

They went down the road to the swamp, climbed the snake fence, followed the path to the old trail and then turned south

upon it. Elnora indicated to Philip the trail with remnants o sagging barbed wire.

"It was ten years ago," she said. "I was a little schoolgirl, bu I wandered widely even then, and no one cared. I saw him often He had been in a city institution all his life, when he took th job of keeping timber thieves out of this swamp, before many tree had been cut. It was a strong man's work, and he was a frail boy but he grew hardier as he lived out of doors. This trail we ar on is the path his feet first wore, in those days when he was in sane with fear and eaten up with loneliness, but he stuck to hi work and won out. I used to come down to the road and creep among the bushes as far as I dared, to watch him pass. He walked mostly, at times he rode a wheel.

"Some days his face was dreadfully sad, others it was so deter mined a little child could see the force in it, and once he was radiant. That day the Swamp Angel was with him. I can't tell you what she was like. I never say anyone who resembled her. He stopped close here to show her a bird's nest. Then they went on to a sort of flower-room he had made, and he sang for her. By the time he left, I had gotten bold enough to come out on the trail, and I met the big Scotchman Freckles lived with. He saw me catching moths and butterflies, so he took me to the flower room and gave me everything there. I don't dare come alone often, so I can't keep it up as he did, but you can see something of how it was."

Elnora led the way and Philip followed. The outlines of the room were not distinct, because many of the trees were gone, but Elnora showed how it had been as nearly as she could.

"The swamp is almost ruined now," she said. "The maples, walnuts, and cherries are all gone. The talking trees are the only things left worth while."

"The 'talking trees'! I don't understand," commented Philip.

"No wonder!" laughed Elnora. "They are my discovery. You know all trees whisper and talk during the summer, but there are two that have so much to say they keep on the whole winter, when the others are silent. The beeches and oaks so love to talk, they cling to their dead, dry leaves. In the winter the winds are

iffest and blow most, so these trees whisper, chatter, sob, laugh, nd at times roar until the sound is deafening. They never cease ntil new leaves come out in the spring to push off the old ones. love to stand beneath them with my ear to the trunks, interpret- ig what they say to fit my moods. The beeches branch low, and ieir leaves are small so they only know common earthly things; ut the oaks run straight above almost all other trees before they ranch, their arms are mighty, their leaves large. They meet the inds that travel around the globe, and from them learn the big ings."

Philip studied the girl face. "What do the beeches tell you, lnora?" he asked gently.

"To be patient, to be unselfish, to do unto others as I would ave them do to me."

"And the oaks?"

"They say 'be true,' 'live a clean life,' 'send your soul up here nd the winds of the world will teach it what honor achieves.' "

"Wonderful secrets, those!" marveled Philip. "Are they tell- g them now? Could I hear?"

"No. They are only gossiping now. This is playtime. They tell ie big secrets to a white world, when the music inspires them."

"The music?"

"All other trees are harps in the winter. Their trunks are the ames, their branches the strings, the winds the musicians. Vhen the air is cold and clear, the world very white, and the harp usic swelling, then the talking trees tell the strengthening, up- fting things."

"You wonderful girl!" cried Philip. "What a woman you will e!"

"If I am a woman at all worth while, it will be because I have ad such wonderful opportunities," said Elnora. "Not every girl driven to the forest to learn what God has to say there. Here re the remains of Freckles's room. The time the Angel came here e sang to her, and I listened. I never heard music like that. No onder she loved him. Everyone who knew him did, and they do ct. Try that log, it makes a fairly good seat. This old storebox as his treasure house, just as it's now mine. I will show you

my dearest possession. I do not dare take it home because moth
can't overcome her dislike for it. It was my father's, and in son
ways I am like him. This is the strongest."

Elnora lifted the violin and began to play. She wore a scho
dress of green gingham, with the sleeves rolled to the elbow
She seemed a part of the setting all around her. Her head shor
like a small dark sun, and her face never had seemed so ros
flushed and fair. From the instant she drew the bow, her li
parted and her eyes turned toward something far away in th
swamp, and never did she give more of that impression of feelin
for her notes and repeating something audible only to her. Phili
was too close to get the best effect. He arose and stepped bac
several yards, leaning against a large tree, looking and listenin
intently.

As he changed positions he saw that Mrs. Comstock had fo
lowed them, and was standing on the trail, where she could n
have helped hearing everything Elnora had said. So to Phili
before her and the mother watching on the trail, Elnora playe
the Song of the Limberlost. It seemed as if the swamp hushed a
its other voices and spoke only through her dancing bow. Th
mother out on the trail had heard it all, once before from th
girl, many times from her father. To the man it was a revelatio
He stood so stunned he forgot Mrs. Comstock. He tried to realiz
what a city audience would say to that music, from such a playe
with a similar background, and he could not imagine.

He was wondering what he dared say, how much he might ex
press, when the last note fell and the girl laid the violin in the cas
closed the door, locked it and hid the key in the rotting wood a
the end of a log. Then she came to him. Philip stood looking a
her curiously.

"I wonder," he said, "what people would say to that?"

"I played that in public once," said Elnora. "I think the
liked it, fairly well. I had a note yesterday offering me the leader
ship of the high school orchestra in Onabasha. I can take it a
well as not. None of my talks to the grades come the first thing i
the morning. I can play a few minutes in the orchestra and reac
the rooms in plenty of time. It will be more work that I love, an

ke finding the money. I would gladly play for nothing merely to
e able to express myself."

"With some people it makes a regular battlefield of the human
eart—this struggle for self-expression," said Philip. "You are
oing to do beautiful work in the world, and do it well. When I
ealize that your violin belonged to your father, that he played
before you were born, and it no doubt affected your mother
rongly, and then couple with that the years you have roamed
ese fields and swamps finding in nature all you had to lavish
our heart upon, I can see how you evolved. I understand what
ou mean by self-expression. I know something of what you have
express. The world never so wanted your message as it does
ow. It is hungry for the things you know. I can see easily how
our position came to you. What you have to give is taught in
college, and I am not sure but you would spoil yourself if you
ied to run your mind through a set groove with hundreds of
hers. I never thought I should say such a thing to anyone, but
do say to you, and I honestly believe it; give up the college idea.
our mind does not need that sort of development. Stick close
your work in the woods. You are becoming so infinitely greater
it, than the best college girl I ever knew, that there is no
mparison. When you have money to spend, take that violin
d go to one of the world's great masters and let the Limberlost
ng to him; if he thinks he can improve it, very well. I have my
ubts."

"Do you really mean that you would give up all idea of going
college, in my place?"

"I really mean it," said Philip. "If I now held the money in
y hands to send you, and could give it to you in some way you
ould accept I would not. I do not know why it is the fate
the world always to want something different from what life
ves them. If you only could realize it, my girl, you are in college,
d have been always. You are in the school of experience, and
has taught you to think, and given you a heart. God knows I
vy the man who wins it! You have been in the college of the
mberlost all your life, and I never met a graduate from any
her institution who could begin to compare with you in sanity,

clarity, and interesting knowledge. I wouldn't even advise you t read too many books on your lines. You acquire your material firs hand, and you know that you are right. What you should do is t begin early to practice self-expression. Don't wait too long to te us about the woods as you know them."

"Follow the course of the Bird Woman, you mean?" aske Elnora.

"In your own way; with your own light. She won't live forever You are younger, and you will be ready to begin where she ends The swamp has given you all you need so far; now you give it t the world in payment. College be confounded! Go to work an show people what there is in you!"

Not until then did he remember Mrs. Comstock.

"Should we go out to the trail and see if your mother is com ing?" he asked.

"Here she is now," said Elnora. "Gracious, it's a mercy I go that violin put away in time! I didn't expect her so soon," whis pered the girl as she turned and went toward her mother. Mr Comstock's expression was peculiar as she looked at Elnora.

"I forgot that you were making sun-preserves and they didn require much cooking," she said. "We should have waited fo you."

"Not at all!" answered Mrs. Comstock. "Have you foun anything yet?"

"Nothing that I can show you," said Elnora. "I am almos sure I have found an idea that will revolutionize the whole cours of my work, thought, and ambitions."

" 'Ambitions!' My, what a hefty word!" laughed Mrs. Com stock. "Now who would suspect a little red-haired country gi of harboring such a deadly germ in her body? Can you te mother about it?"

"Not if you talk to me that way, I can't," said Elnora.

"Well, I guess we better let ambition lie. I've always heard i was safest asleep. If you ever get a bona fide attack, it will b time to attend it. Let's hunt specimens. It is June. Philip and are in the grades. You have an hour to put an idea into our head that will stick for a lifetime, and grow for good. That's the wa

look at your job. Now, what are you going to give us? We
on't want any old silly stuff that has been hashed over and over,
e want a big new idea to plant in our hearts. Come on, Miss
eacher, what is the boiled-down, double-distilled essence of
ne? Give it to us strong. We are large enough to furnish it
veloping ground. Hurry up! Time is short and we are waiting.
hat is the miracle of June? What one thing epitomizes the
ole month, and makes it just a little different from any other?"
"The birth of these big night moths," said Elnora promptly.
Philip clapped his hands. The tears started to Mrs. Comstock's
es. She took Elnora in her arms, and kissed her forehead.
"You'll do!" she said. "June is June, not because it has bloom,
d, fruit, or flower, exclusive to it alone. It's half May and half
ly in all of them. But to me it's just June, when it comes to these
eat, velvet-winged night moths which sweep its moonlit skies,
nsummating their scheme of creation, and dropping like a
omed-out flower. Give them moths for June. Then make that
e basis of your year's work. Find the distinctive feature of each
nth, the one thing which marks it a time apart, and hit them
arely between the eyes with it. Even the babies of the lowest
ades can comprehend moths when they see a few emerge, and
rn their history, as it can be lived before them. You should
w your specimens in pairs, then their eggs, the growing
erpillars, and then the cocoons. You want to dig out the red
art of every month in the year, and hold it pulsing before them.
'I can't name all of them offhand, but I think of one more
ht now. February belongs to our winter birds. It is then the
at horned owl of the swamp courts his mate, the big hawks
r, and even the crows begin to take notice. These are truly our
ds. Like the poor we have them always with us. You should
r the musicians of this swamp in February, Philip, on a mellow
ht. Oh, but they are in earnest! For twenty-one years I've
ened by night to the great owls, all the smaller sizes, the foxes,
ns, and every resident left in these woods, and by day to the
vks, yellow-hammers, sap-suckers, titmice, crows, and other
ter birds. Only just now it's come to me that the distinctive
ture of February is not linen bleaching, nor sugar making; it's

the love month of our very own birds. Give them hawks and owl for February, Elnora."

With flashing eyes the girl looked at Philip. "How's that?" sh said. "Don't you think I will succeed, with such help? Yo should hear the concert she is talking about! It is simply inde scribable when the ground is covered with snow, and the moon light white."

"It's about the best music we have," said Mrs. Comstock. " wonder if you couldn't copy that and make a strong, origina piece out of it for your violin, Elnora?"

There was one tense breath, then—"I could try," said Elnor simply.

Philip rushed to the rescue. "We must go to work," he said and began examining a walnut branch for Luna moth eggs Elnora joined him while Mrs. Comstock drew her embroider from her pocket and sat on a log. She said she was tired, the could come for her when they were ready to go. She could hea their voices around her until she called them at suppertime When they came to her she stood waiting on the trail, the sewin in one hand, the violin in the other. Elnora became very white but followed the trail without a word. Philip, unable to see a woman carry a heavier load than he, reached for the instrument Mrs. Comstock shook her head. She carried the violin home, too it into her room and closed the door. Elnora turned to Philip.

"If she destroys that, I shall die!" cried the girl.

"She won't!" said Philip. "You misunderstand her. She wouldn't have said what she did about the owls, if she had meant to. She is your mother. No one loves you as she does. Trus her! Myself—I think she's simply great!"

Mrs. Comstock returned with serene face, and all of them helped with the supper. When it was over Philip and Elnora sorted and classified the afternoon's specimens, and made a trip to the woods to paint and light several trees for moths. When they came back Mrs. Comstock sat in the arbor, and they joined her. The moonlight was so intense, print could have been read by it. The damp night air held odors near to earth, making flower and tree perfume strong. A thousand insects were serenad-

g, and in the maple the grosbeak occasionally said a reassuring ord to his wife, while she answered that all was well. A whip-oor-will wailed in the swamp and beside the blue-bordered pool chat complained disconsolately. Mrs. Comstock went into the abin, but she returned immediately, laying the violin and bow cross Elnora's lap. "I wish you would give us a little music," she id.

CHAPTER XVII

Wherein Mrs. Comstock Dances in the Moonlight, and Elnora Makes a Confession

BILLY was swinging in the hammock, at peace with himself an all the world, when he thought he heard something. He sat bo upright, his eyes staring. Once he opened his lips, then thoug again and closed them. The sound persisted. Billy vaulted th fence, and ran down the road with his queer sidewise hop. Whe he neared the Comstock cabin, he left the warm dust of the high way and stepped softly at slower pace over the rank grasses the roadside. He had heard aright. The violin was in the grap arbor, singing a perfect jumble of everything, poured out in a exultant tumult. The strings were voicing the joy of a happy gi heart.

Billy climbed the fence enclosing the west woods and crept to ward the arbor. He was not a spy and not a sneak. He merel wanted to satisfy his child heart as to whether Mrs. Comstoc was at home, and Elnora at last playing her loved violin with he mother's consent. One peep sufficed. Mrs. Comstock sat in th moonlight, her head leaning against the arbor; on her face wa a look of perfect peace and contentment. As he stared at he the bow hesitated a second and Mrs. Comstock spoke: "That all very melodious and sweet," she said, "but I do wish yo could play Money Musk and some of the tunes I danced as girl."

Elnora had been carefully avoiding every note that might b

eminiscent of her father. At the words she laughed softly and egan "Turkey in the Straw." An instant later Mrs. Comstock as dancing in the moonlight. Ammon sprang to her side, caught er in his arms, while to Elnora's laughter and the violin's im- etus they danced until they dropped panting on the arbor bench.

Billy scarcely knew when he reached the road. His light feet arely touched the soft way, so swiftly he flew. He vaulted the nce and burst into the house.

"Aunt Margaret! Uncle Wesley!" he screamed. "Listen! isten! She's playing it! Elnora's playing her violin at home! nd Aunt Kate is dancing like anything before the arbor! I w her in the moonlight! I ran down! Oh, Aunt Margaret!"

Billy fled sobbing to Margaret's breast.

"Why, Billy!" she chided. "Don't cry, you little dunce! That's hat we've all prayed for these many years; but you must be istaken about Kate. I can't believe it."

Billy lifted his head. "Well, you just have to!" he said. "When say I saw anything, Uncle Wesley knows I did. The city man as dancing with her. They danced together and Elnora laughed. ut it didn't look funny to me; I was scared."

"Who was it said 'wonders never cease!' " asked Wesley. "You ark my word, once you get Kate Comstock started, you can't op her. There's a wagon load of penned-up force in her. Danc- g in the moonlight! Well, I'll be hanged!"

Billy was at his side instantly. "Whoever does it will have to ng me, too," he cried.

Sinton threw his arm around Billy and drew him closely. "Tell all about it, son," he said. Billy told. "And when Elnora just opped a breath, 'Can't you play some of the old things I knew hen I was a girl?' said her ma. Then Elnora began to do a ing that made you want to whirl round and round, and quicker n scat there was her ma a-whirling. The city man, he ups and abs her and whirls, too, and back in the woods I was going st like they did. Elnora begins to laugh, and I ran to tell you, s I knew you'd like to know. Now, all the world is right, ain't " ended Billy in supreme satisfaction.

"You just bet it is!" said Wesley.

Billy looked steadily at Margaret. "Is it, Aunt Margaret?"

Margaret Sinton smiled at him bravely.

An hour later when Billy was ready to climb the stairs to h room, he went to Margaret to say good night. He leaned again her an instant, then brought his lips to her ear. "Wish I coul get your little girls back for you!" he whispered and dashed t ward the stairs.

Down at the Comstock cabin the violin played on until Elnor was so tired she scarcely could lift the bow. Then Philip wer home. The women walked to the gate with him, and stood watc ing him from sight.

"That's what I call one decent young man!" said Mrs. Com stock. "To see him fit in with us, you'd think he'd been brough up in a cabin; but it's likely he's always had the very cream the pot."

"Yes, I think so," laughed Elnora, "but it hasn't hurt him. I'v never seen anything I could criticise. He's teaching me so muc unconsciously. You know he graduated from Harvard, and ha several degrees in law. He's coming in the morning, and we are go ing to put in a big day on Catocalæ."

"Which is——?"

"Those gray moths with wings that fold back like big flie and they appear as if they had been carved from old wood. Then when they fly, the lower wings flash out and they are red an black, or gold and black, or pink and black, or dozens of bright beautiful colors combined with black. No one ever has classifie all of them and written their complete history, unless the Bir Woman is doing it now. She wants everything she can get abou them."

"I remember," said Mrs. Comstock. "They are mighty prett things. I've started up slews of them from the vines covering th logs, all my life. I must be cautious and catch them after this but they seem powerful spry. I might get hold of something rare." She thought intently and added, "And wouldn't know it if I did It would just be my luck. I've had the rarest thing on earth i reach this many a day and only had the wit to cinch it just as it wa going. I'll bet I don't let anything else escape me."

Next morning Philip came early, and he and Elnora went at once to the fields and woods. Mrs. Comstock had come to believe so implicitly in him that she now stayed at home to complete the work before she joined them, and when she did she often sat sewing, leaving them wandering hours at a time. It was noon before she finished, and then she packed a basket of lunch. She found Elnora and Philip near the violet patch, which was still in its prime. They all lunched together in the shade of a wild crab thicket, with flowers spread at their feet, and the gold orioles streaking the air with flashes of light and trailing ecstasy behind them, while the red-wings, as always, asked the most impertinent questions. Then Mrs. Comstock carried the basket back to the cabin, and Philip and Elnora sat on a log, resting a few minutes. They had unexpected luck, and both were eager to continue the search.

"Do you remember your promise about these violets?" asked he. "Tomorrow is Edith's birthday, and if I'd put them special delivery on the morning train, she'd get them in the late afternoon. They ought to keep that long. She leaves for the North next day."

"Of course, you may have them," said Elnora. "We will quit long enough before supper to gather a large bunch. They can be packed so they will carry all right. They should be perfectly fresh, specially if we gather them this evening and let them drink all night."

Then they went back to hunt Catocalæ. It was a long and a happy search. It led them into new, unexplored nooks of the woods, past a red-poll nest, and where goldfinches prospected for thistledown for the cradles they would line a little later. It led them into real forest, where deep, dark pools lay, where the hermit thrush and the wood robin extracted the essence from all other bird melody, and poured it out in their pure bell-tone notes. It seemed as if every old gray tree trunk, slab of loose bark, and prostrate log yielded the flashing gray treasures; while of all others they seemed to take alarm most easily, and be most difficult to capture.

Philip came to Elnora at dusk, daintily holding one by the body,

its dark wings showing and its long slender legs trying to clasp hi fingers and creep from his hold.

"Oh, for mercy's sake!" cried Elnora, staring at him.

"I half believe it!" exulted Ammon.

"Did you ever see one?"

"Only in collections, and very seldom there."

Elnora studied the black wings intently. "I surely believe that' Sappho," she marveled. "The Bird Woman will be overjoyed.'

"We must get the cyanide jar quickly," said Philip. "I wouldn' lose her for anything. Such a chase as she led me!"

Elnora brought the jar and began gathering up paraphernalia

"When you make a find like that," she said, "it's the right tim to quit and feel glorious all the rest of that day. I tell you I'm proud! We will go now. We have barely time to carry out ou plans before supper. Won't mother be pleased to see that we hav a rare one?"

"I'd like to see anyone more pleased than I am!" said Phili Ammon. "I feel as if I'd earned my supper tonight. Let's go."

He took the greater part of the load and stepped aside fo Elnora to precede him. She followed the path, broken by th grazing cattle, toward the cabin and nearest the violet patch sh stopped, laid down her net, and the things she carried. Phili passed her and hurried straight toward the back gate.

"Aren't you going to——?" began Elnora.

"I'm going to get this moth home in a hurry," he said. "Thi cyanide has lost its strength, and it's not working well. We nee some fresh in the jar."

He had forgotten the violets! Elnora stood looking after him a curious expression on her face. One second so—then she picke up the net and followed. At the blue-bordered pool she pause and half turned back, then she closed her lips firmly and went on It was nine o'clock when Philip said good-bye, and started t town. His gay whistle floated to them from the farthest corner o the Limberlost. Elnora complained of being tired, so she went t her room and to bed. But sleep would not come. Thought wa racing in her brain and the longer she lay the wider awake sh grew. At last she softly slipped from bed, lighted her lamp an

egan opening boxes. Then she went to work. Two hours later a eautiful birch bark basket, strongly and artistically made, stood n her table. She set a tiny alarm clock at three, returned to ed and fell asleep instantly with a smile on her lips.

She was on the floor with the first tinkle of the alarm, and astily dressing, she picked up the basket and a box to fit it, rept down the stairs, and out to the violet patch. She was unfraid as it was growing light, and lining the basket with damp nosses she swiftly began picking, with practiced hands, the best f the flowers. She scarcely could tell which were freshest at times, ut day soon came creeping over the Limberlost and peeped at er. The robins awoke all their neighbors, and a babel of bird otes filled the air. The dew was dripping, while the first strong ays of light fell on a world in which Elnora worshiped. When ne basket was filled to overflowing, she set it in the stout pasteoard box, packed it solid with mosses, tied it firmly and slipped nder the cord a note she had written the previous night.

Then she took a short cut across the woods and walked swiftly o Onabasha. It was after six o'clock, but all of the city she ished to avoid were asleep. She had no trouble in finding a small oy out, and she stood at a distance waiting while he rang Dr. ummon's bell and delivered the package for Philip to a maid, ith the note which was to be given him at once.

On the way home through the woods passing some baited trees ne collected the captive moths. She entered the kitchen with nem so naturally that Mrs. Comstock made no comment. After reakfast Elnora went to her room, cleared away all trace of the ight's work and was out in the arbor mounting moths when hilip came down the road. "I am tired sitting," she said to her nother. "I think I will walk a few rods and meet him."

"Who's a trump?" he called from afar.

"Not you!" retorted Elnora. "Confess that you forgot!"

"Completely!" said Philip. "But luckily it would not have been atal. I wrote Polly last week to send Edith something appropriate oday, with my card. But that touch from the woods will be very ffective. Thank you more than I can say. Aunt Anna and I un-

packed it to see the basket, and it was a beauty. She says yo
are always doing such things."

"Well, I hope not!" laughed Elnora. "If you'd seen me sneak
ing out before dawn, not to awaken mother and coming in wit
moths to make her think I'd been to the trees, you'd know it was
most especial occasion."

Then Philip understood two things: Elnora's mother did no
know of the early morning trip to the city, and the girl had com
to meet him to tell him so.

"You were a brick to do it!" he whispered as he closed the gat
behind them. "I'll never forget you for it. Thank you ever s
much."

"I did not do that for you," said Elnora tersely. "I did i
mostly to preserve my own self-respect. I saw you were forgetting
If I did it for anything besides that, I did it for her."

"Just look what I've brought!" said Philip, entering the arbo
and greeting Mrs. Comstock. "Borrowed it of the Bird Woman
And it isn't hers. A rare edition of Catocalæ with colored plates
I told her the best I could, and she said to try for Sappho here
I suspect the Bird Woman will be out presently. She was al
excitement."

Then they bent over the book together and with the mounted
moth before them determined her family. The Bird Woman did
come later, and carried the moth away to put into a book and
Elnora and Philip were freshly filled with enthusiasm.

So these days were the beginning of the weeks that followed
Six of them flying on Time's wings, each filled to the brim with
interest. After June, the moth hunts grew less frequent; the fields
and woods were searched for material for Elnora's grade work
The most absorbing occupation they found was in carrying out
Mrs. Comstock's suggestion to learn the vital thing for which each
month was distinctive, and make that the key to the nature work
They wrote out a list of the months, opposite each the things al
of them could suggest which seemed to pertain to that month
alone, and then tried to sift until they found something typical
Mrs. Comstock was a great help. Her mother had been Dutch
and had brought from Holland numerous quaint sayings and

uperstitions easily traceable to Pliny's Natural History; and in Mrs. Comstock's early years in Ohio she had heard much Indian alk among her elders, so she knew the signs of each season, and ometimes they helped. Always her practical thought and sterling ommon sense were useful. When they were afield until exhausted hey came back to the cabin for food, to prepare specimens and lassify them, and to talk over the day. Sometimes Philip brought ooks and read while Elnora and her mother worked, and every ight Mrs. Comstock asked for the violin. Her perfect hunger or music was sufficient evidence of how she had suffered without . So the days crept by, golden, filled with useful work and pure leasure.

The grosbeak had led the family in the maple abroad and a econd brood, in a wild grape vine clambering over the well, was lmost ready for flight. The dust lay thick on the country roads, he days grew warmer; summer was just poising to slip into fall, nd Philip remained, coming each day as if he had belonged there lways.

One warm August afternoon Mrs. Comstock looked up from he ruffle on which she was engaged to see a blue-coated messenger nter the gate.

"Is Philip Ammon here?" asked the boy.

"He is," said Mrs. Comstock.

"I have a message for him."

"He is in the woods back of the cabin. I will ring the bell. Do ou know if it is important?"

"Urgent," said the boy, "I rode hard."

Mrs. Comstock stepped to the back door and clanged the inner bell sharply, paused a second, and rang again. In a short me Philip and Elnora ran down the path.

"Are you ill, mother?" cried Elnora.

Mrs. Comstock indicated the boy. "There is an important essage for Philip," she said.

He muttered an excuse and tore open the telegram. His color ded slightly. "I have to take the first train," he said. "My father ill and I am needed."

He handed the sheet to Elnora. "I have about two hours, as I

remember the trains north, but my things are all over Uncle Doc house, so I must go at once."

"Certainly," said Elnora, giving back the message. "Is ther anything I can do to help? Mother, bring Philip a glass of butte milk to start on. I will gather what you have here."

"Never mind. There is nothing of importance. I don't want t be hampered. I'll send for it if I miss anything I need."

Philip drank the milk, said good-bye to Mrs. Comstock thanked her for all her kindness, and turned to Elnora.

"Will you walk to the edge of the Limberlost with me?" h asked. Elnora assented. Mrs. Comstock followed to the gat urged him to come again soon, and repeated her good-bye. The she went back to the arbor to await Elnora's return. As sh watched down the road she smiled softly.

"I had an idea he would speak to me first," she thought, "bu this may change things some. He hasn't time. Elnora will com back a happy girl, and she has good reason. He is a model youn man. Her lot will be very different from mine."

She picked up her embroidery and began setting dainty, precis little stitches, possible only to certain women.

On the road Elnora spoke first. "I do hope it is nothing serious, she said. "Is he usually strong?"

"Quite strong," said Philip. "I am not at all alarmed but I am very much ashamed. I have been well enough for the past mont to have gone home and helped him with some critical cases tha were keeping him at work in this heat. I was enjoying myself so wouldn't offer to go, and he would not ask me to come, so lon as he could help it. I have allowed him to overtax himself unt he is down, and mother and Polly are north at our cottage. He never been sick before, and it's probable I am to blame that h is now."

"He intended you to stay this long when you came," urge Elnora.

"Yes, but it's hot in Chicago. I should have remembered him He is always thinking of me. Possibly he has needed me for days I am ashamed to go to him in splendid condition and admit that was having such a fine time I forgot to come home."

"You have had a fine time, then?" asked Elnora.

They had reached the fence. Philip vaulted over to take a short cut across the fields. He turned and looked at her.

"The best, the sweetest, and most wholesome time any man ever had in this world," he said. "Elnora, if I talked hours I couldn't make you understand what a girl I think you are. I never in all my life hated anything as I hate leaving you. It seems to me that I have not strength to do it."

"If you have learned anything worth while from me," said Elnora, "that should be it. Just to have strength to go to your duty, and to go quickly."

He caught the hand she held out to him in both his. "Elnora, these days we have had together, have they been sweet to you?"

"Beautiful days!" said Elnora. "Each like a perfect dream to be thought over and over all my life. Oh, they have been the only really happy days I've ever known; these days rich with mother's love, and doing useful work with your help. Good-bye! You must hurry!"

Philip gazed at her. He tried to drop her hand, and only clutched it closer. Suddenly he drew her toward him. "Elnora," he whispered, "will you kiss me good-bye?"

Elnora drew back and stared at him with wide eyes. "I'd strike you sooner!" she said. "Have I ever said or done anything in your presence that made you feel free to ask that, Philip Ammon?"

"No!" panted Philip. "No! I think so much of you, I wanted to touch your lips once before I left you. You know, Elnora——"

"Don't distress yourself," said Elnora calmly. "I am broad enough to judge you sanely. I know what you mean. It would be no harm to you. It would not matter to me, but here we will think of someone else. Edith Carr would not want your lips tomorrow if she knew they had touched mine today. I was wise to say: 'Go quickly!' "

Philip still clung to her. "Will you write me?" he begged.

"No," said Elnora. "There is nothing to say, save good-bye. We can do that now."

He held on. "Promise that you will write me only one letter,"

he urged. "I want just one message from you to lock in my desk and keep always. Promise you will write once, Elnora."

She looked into his eyes, and smiled serenely. "If the talkin trees tell me this winter, the secret of how a man may grov perfect, I will write you what it is, Philip. In all the time I hav known you, I never have liked you so little. Good-bye."

She drew away her hand and swiftly turned back to the road Philip Ammon, wordless, started toward Onabasha on a run.

Elnora crossed the road, climbed the fence and sought th shelter of their own woods. She chose a diagonal course an followed it until she came to the path leading past the violet patch She went down this hurriedly. Her hands were clenched at he sides, her eyes dry and bright, her cheeks red-flushed, and he breath coming fast. When she reached the patch she turned into i and stood looking around her.

The mosses were dry, the flowers gone, weeds a foot hig covered it. She turned away and went on down the path unt she was almost in sight of the cabin.

Mrs. Comstock smiled and waited in the arbor until it oc curred to her that Elnora was a long time coming, so she went t the gate. The road stretched away toward the Limberlost empt and lonely. Then she knew that Elnora had gone into their ow woods and would come in the back way. She could not under stand why the girl did not hurry to her with what she would hav to tell. She went out and wandered around the garden. Then sh stepped into the path and started along the way leading to th woods, past the pool now framed in a thick setting of yellow lilie Then she saw, and stopped, gasping for breath. Her hands flew up and her lined face grew ghastly. She stared at the sky an then at the prostrate girl figure. Over and over she tried to speak but only a dry breath came. She turned and fled back to th garden.

In the familiar enclosure she gazed around her like a cage animal seeking escape. The sun beat down on her bare hea mercilessly, and mechanically she moved to the shade of a half grown hickory tree that voluntarily had sprouted beside the mil house. At her feet lay an axe with which she made kindlings fo

res. She stooped and picked it up. The memory of that prone gure sobbing in the grass caught her with a renewed spasm. he shut her eyes as if to close it out. That made hearing so cute she felt certain she heard Elnora moaning beside the path. The eyes flew open. They looked straight at a few spindling tomato lants set too near the tree and stunted by its shade. Mrs. Comtock whirled on the hickory and swung the axe. Her hair shook own, her clothing became disarranged, in the heat the perspiraion streamed, but stroke fell on stroke until the tree crashed over, razing a corner of the milk house and smashing the garden fence n the east.

At the sound Elnora sprang to her feet and came running down he garden walk. "Mother!" she cried. "Mother! What in the vorld are you doing?"

Mrs. Comstock wiped her ghastly face on her apron. "I've aid out to cut that tree for years," she said. "It shades the beets n the morning, and the tomatoes in the afternoon!"

Elnora uttered one wild little cry and fled into her mother's rms. "Oh, mother!" she sobbed. "Will you ever forgive me?"

Mrs. Comstock's arms swept together in a tight grip around Elnora.

"There isn't a thing on God's footstool from a to izzard I won't orgive you, my precious girl!" she said. "Tell mother what it s!"

Elnora lifted her wet face. "He told me," she panted, "just as oon as he decently could—that second day he told me. Almost ll his life he's been engaged to a girl at home. He never cared nything about me. He was only interested in the moths and rowing strong."

Mrs. Comstock's arms tightened. With a shaking hand she troked the bright hair.

"Tell me, honey," she said. "Is he to blame for a single one f these tears?"

"Not one!" sobbed Elnora. "Oh, mother, I won't forgive you if ou don't believe that. Not one! He never said, or looked, or did nything all the world might not have known. He likes me very nuch as a friend. He hated to go dreadfully!"

"Elnora!" the mother's head bent until the white hair mingle with the brown. "Elnora, why didn't you tell me at first?"

Elnora caught her breath in a sharp snatch. "I know I should! she sobbed. "I will bear any punishment for not, but I didn feel as if I possibly could. I was afraid."

"Afraid of what?" The shaking hand was on the hair again.

"Afraid you wouldn't let him come!" panted Elnora. "And ol mother, I wanted him so!"

CHAPTER XVIII

Wherein Mrs. Comstock Experiments with Rejuvenation, and Elnora Teaches Natural History

For the following week Mrs. Comstock and Elnora worked so ard there was no time to talk, and they were compelled to sleep rom physical exhaustion. Neither of them made any pretence of ating, for they could not swallow without an effort, so they rank milk and worked. Elnora kept on setting bait for Catacolæ nd Sphinginæ, which, unlike the big moths of June, live several nonths. She took all the dragonflies and butterflies she could, and hen she went over the list for the man of India, she found, to er amazement, that with Philip's help she once more had it com- lete save a pair of Yellow Emperors.

This circumstance was so surprising she had a fleeting thought f writing Philip and asking him to see if he could not secure her pair. She did tell the Bird Woman, who from every source at er command tried to complete the series with these moths, but ould not find any for sale.

"I think the mills of the Gods are grinding this grist," said lnora, "and we might as well wait patiently until they choose send a Yellow Emperor."

Mrs. Comstock invented work. When she had nothing more to , she hoed in the garden although the earth was hard and dry nd there were no plants that really needed attention. Then ame a notification that Elnora would be compelled to attend week's session of the Teachers' Institute held at the county seat

twenty miles north of Onabasha the following week. That gav them something of which to think and real work to do. Elnor was requested to bring her violin. As she was on the program c one of the most important sessions for a talk on nature work i grade schools, she was driven to prepare her speech, also t select and practice some music. Her mother turned her attentio to clothing.

They went to Onabasha together and purchased a simple an appropriate fall suit and hat, goods for a dainty little colore frock, and a dress skirt and several fancy waists. Margaret Sinto came down and the sewing began. When everything was finishe and packed, Elnora kissed her mother good-bye at the depot, an entered the train. Mrs. Comstock went into the waiting-room an dropped into a seat to rest. Her heart was so sore her whole le side felt tender. She was half starved for the food she had r appetite to take. She had worked in dogged determination unt she was exhausted. For a time she simply sat and rested. The she began to think. She was glad Elnora had gone where sh would be compelled to fix her mind on other matters for a fe days. She remembered the girl had said she wanted to go.

School would begin the following week. She thought over wh Elnora would have to do to accomplish her work successfull She would be compelled to arise at six o'clock, walk three mil through varying weather, lead the high school orchestra, and the put in the remainder of the day traveling from building to buil ing over the city, teaching a specified length of time every we in each room. She must have her object lessons ready, and sh must do a certain amount of practicing with the orchestra. The a cold lunch at noon, and a three-mile walk at night.

"Humph!" said Mrs. Comstock, "to get through that the g would have to be made of cast-iron. I wonder how I can he her best?"

She thought deeply.

"The less she sees of what she's been having all summer, t sooner she'll feel better about it," she muttered.

She arose, went to the bank and inquired for the cashier.

"I want to know just how I am fixed here," she said.

The cashier laughed. "You haven't been in a hurry," he replied. "We have been ready for you any time these twenty years, but you didn't seem to pay much attention. Your account is rather flourishing. Interest, when it gets to compounding, is quite a money breeder. Come back here to a table and I will show you your balances."

Mrs. Comstock sank into a chair and waited while the cashier read a jumble of figures to her. It meant that her deposits had exceeded her expenses from one to three hundred dollars a year, according to the cattle, sheep, hogs, poultry, butter, and eggs she had sold. The aggregate of these sums had been compounding interest throughout the years. Mrs. Comstock stared at the total with dazed and unbelieving eyes. Through her sick heart rushed the realization that if she merely had stood before that wicket and asked one question, she would have known that all those bitter years of skimping for Elnora and herself had been unnecessary. She arose and went back to the depot.

"I want to send a message," she said. She picked up the pencil, and with rash extravagance, wrote, "Found money at bank didn't know about. If you want to go to college, come on first train and get ready." She hesitated a second and then she said to herself grimly, "Yes, I'll pay for that, too," and recklessly added, "With love, Mother." Then she sat waiting for the answer. It came in less than an hour. "Will teach this winter. With dearest love, Elnora."

Mrs. Comstock held the message a long time. When she arose she was ravenously hungry, but the pain in her heart was a little easier. She went to a restaurant and ate some food, then to a dressmaker where she ordered four dresses: two very plain everyday ones, a serviceable dark gray cloth suit, and a soft light gray silk with touches of lavender and lace. She made a heavy list of purchases at Brownlee's, and the remainder of the day she did business in her direct and spirited way. At night she was so tired she scarcely could walk home, but she built a fire and cooked and ate a hearty meal.

Later she went out beside the west fence and gathered an armful of tansy which she boiled to a thick green tea. Then she

stirred in oatmeal until it was a stiff paste. She spread a shee over her bed and began tearing strips of old muslin. She bandaged each hand and arm with the mixture and plastered the soggy evil-smelling stuff in a thick poultice over her face and neck. She was so tired she went to sleep, and when she awoke she was hal skinned. She bathed her face and hands, did the work and wen back to town, coming home at night to go through the same process.

By the third morning she was a raw even red, the fourth sh had faded to a brilliant pink under the soothing influence of cream recommended. That day came a letter from Elnora saying that she would remain where she was until Saturday morning, and then come to Ellen Brownlee's at Onabasha and stay for th Saturday's session of teachers to arrange their year's work. Sun day was Ellen's last day at home, and she wanted Elnora ver much. She had to call together the orchestra and practice then Sunday; and could not come home until after school Monday night. Mrs. Comstock at once answered the letter saying thos arrangements suited her.

The following day she was a pale pink, later a delicate porcelai white. Then she went to a hairdresser and had the rope o snowy hair which covered her scalp washed, dressed, and fastened with such pins and combs as were decided to be most becoming She took samples of her dresses, went to a milliner, and bough a street hat to match her suit, and a gray satin with lavende orchids to wear with the silk dress. Her last investment was loose coat of soft gray broadcloth with white lining, and touche of lavender on the embroidered collar, and gray gloves to match

Then she went home, rested and worked by turns until Monday When school closed on that evening, Elnora, so tired she almos trembled, came down the long walk after a late session of teachers meeting, to be stopped by a messenger boy.

"There's a lady wants to see you most important. I am to tak you to the place," he said.

Elnora groaned. She could not imagine who wanted her, bu there was nothing to do but find out; tired and anxious to se her mother as she was.

"This is the place," said the boy, and went his way whistling. lnora was three blocks from the high school building on the me street. She was before a quaint old house, fresh with paint id covered with vines. There was a long wide lot, grass-covered, osely set with trees, and a barn and chicken park at the back at seemed to be occupied. Elnora stepped on the veranda which as furnished with straw rugs, bent-hickory chairs, hanging askets, and a table with a workbox and magazines, and knocked the screen door.

Inside she could see polished floors, walls freshly papered in low-ned, harmonious colors, straw rugs and madras curtains. It emed to be a restful, homelike place to which she had come. A cond later down an open stairway came a tall, dark-eyed woman ith cheeks faintly pink and a crown of fluffy snow-white hair. ie wore a lavender gingham dress with white collar and cuffs, id she called as she advanced: "That screen isn't latched! pen it and come see your brand-new mother, my girl."

Elnora stepped inside the door. "Mother!" she cried. "You my other! I don't believe it!"

"Well, you better!" said Mrs. Comstock, "because it's true! ou said you wished I were like the other girls' mothers, and I've ot as close the mark as I could without any practice. I thought at walk would be too much for you this winter, so I just rented is house and moved in, to be near you, and help more in case m needed. I've only lived here a day, but I like it so well I've a ortal big notion to buy the place."

"But, mother!" protested Elnora, clinging to her wonderingly. You are perfectly beautiful, and this house is a little paradise, it how will we ever pay for it? We can't afford it!"

"Humph! Have you forgotten I telegraphed you I'd found me money I didn't know about? All I've done is paid for, and enty more to settle for all I propose to do."

Mrs. Comstock glanced around with satisfaction.

"I may get homesick as a pup before spring," she said, "but if do I can go back. If I don't, I'll sell some timber and put a few l wells where they don't show much. I can have land enough

cleared for a few fields and put a tenant on our farm, and we w
buy this and settle here. It's for sale."

"You don't look it, but you've surely gone mad!"

"Just the reverse, my girl," said Mrs. Comstock, "I've go
sane. If you are going to undertake this work, you must
convenient to it. And your mother should be where she can s
that you are properly dressed, fed, and cared for. This is our—
me think—reception room. How do you like it? This door lea
to your workroom and study. I didn't do much there because
wasn't sure of my way. But I knew you would want a ru
curtains, table, shelves for books, and a case for your specimer
so I had a carpenter shelve and enclose that end of it. Loo
pretty neat to me. The dining room and kitchen are back, one
the cows in the barn, and some chickens in the coop. I understar
that none of the other girls' mothers milk a cow, so a neighb
boy will tend to ours for a third of the milk. There are thr
bedrooms, and a bath upstairs. Go take one, put on some fre
clothes, and come to supper. You can find your room becau
your things are in it."

Elnora kissed her mother over and over, and hurried upstai
She identified her room by the dressing-case. There were a pret
rug, and curtains, white iron bed, plain and rocking chairs
match her case, a shirtwaist chest, and the big closet was fill
with her old clothing and several new dresses. She found the bat
room, bathed, dressed in fresh linen and went down to a supp
that was an evidence of Mrs. Comstock's highest art in cookin
Elnora was so hungry she ate her first real meal in two week
But the bites went down slowly because she forgot about them
watching her mother.

"How on earth did you do it?" she asked at last. "I alwa
thought you were naturally brown as a nut."

"Oh, that was tan and sunburn!" explained Mrs. Comstoc
"I always knew I was white underneath it. I hated to shade m
face because I hadn't anything but a sunbonnet, and I couldn
stand for it to touch my ears, so I went bareheaded and toc
all the color I accumulated. But when I began to think of mo
ing you in to your work, I saw I must put up an appearance th

ouldn't disgrace you, so I thought I'd best remove the crust. It ook some time, and I hope I may die before I ever endure the eel and the smell of the stuff I used again, but it skinned me icely. What you now see is my own with a little dust of rice owder, for protection. I'm sort of tender yet."

"And your lovely, lovely hair?" breathed Elnora.

"Hairdresser did that!" said Mrs. Comstock. "It cost like noke. But I watched her, and with a little help from you I can ash it alone next time, though it will be hard work. I let her ionkey with it until she said she had found 'my style.' Then I ore it down and had her show me how to build it up again three mes. I thought my arms would drop. When I paid the bill for er work, the time I'd taken, the pins, and combs she'd used, I early had heart failure, but I didn't turn a hair before her. I just niled at her sweetly and said, 'How reasonable you are!' Come to ink of it, she was! She might have charged me ten dollars for hat she did quite as well as nine seventy-five. I couldn't have elped myself. I had made no bargain to begin on."

Then Elnora leaned back in her chair and shouted, in a gust f hearty laughter, so a little of the ache ceased in her breast. here was no time to think, the remainder of that evening, she as so tired she had to sleep, while her mother did not awaken er until she barely had time to dress, breakfast and reach school. here was nothing in the new life to remind her of the old. It eemed as if there never came a minute for retrospection, but her nother appeared on the scene with more work, or some entertain-ng thing to do.

Mrs. Comstock invited Elnora's friends to visit her, and proved erself a bright and interesting hostess. She digested a subject efore she spoke; and when she advanced a view, her point was ure to be original and tersely expressed. Before three months eople waited to hear what she had to say. She kept her ap-earance so in mind that she made a handsome and a dis-nguished figure.

Elnora never mentioned Philip Ammon, neither did Mrs. Com-tock. Early in December came a note and a big box from him. It ontained several books on nature subjects which would be of

much help in school work, a number of conveniences Elnora cou not afford, and a pair of glass-covered plaster casts, for each lar moth she had. In these the upper and under wings of male and f male showed. He explained that she would break her specime easily, carrying them around in boxes. He had seen these ar thought they would be of use. Elnora was delighted with ther and at once began the tedious process of softening the mounte moths and fitting them to the casts molded to receive them. H time was so taken in school, she progressed slowly, so her moth undertook this work. After trying one or two very common on she learned to handle the most delicate with ease. She took kee pride in relaxing the tense moths, fitting them to the cases, polis ing the glass covers to the last degree and sealing them. Th results were beautiful to behold.

Soon after Elnora wrote to Philip:

DEAR FRIEND:

I am writing to thank you for the books, and the box of co veniences sent me for my work. I can use everything with fine r sults. Hope I am giving good satisfaction in my position. You w be interested to learn that when the summer's work was classifie and pinned, I again had my complete collection for the man India, save a Yellow Emperor. I have tried everywhere I know, has the Bird Woman. We cannot find a pair for sale. Fate is again me, at least this season. I shall have to wait until next year and t again.

Thank you very much for helping me with my collection and f the books and cases.

Sincerely yours,
ELNORA COMSTOCK.

Philip was disappointed over that note and instead of keepin it he tore it into bits and dropped them into the wastebasket.

That was precisely what Elnora had intended he should d Christmas brought beautiful cards of greeting to Mrs. Comstoc and Elnora, Easter others, and the year ran rapidly toward sprin Elnora's position had been intensely absorbing, while she ha worked with all her power. She had made a wonderful succe

nd won new friends. Mrs. Comstock had helped in every way she ould, so she was very popular also.

Throughout the winter they had enjoyed the city thoroughly, nd the change of life it afforded, but signs of spring did wonder- ul things to the hearts of the country-bred women. A restlessness egan on bright February days, calmed during March storms and ttacked full force in April. When neither could bear it any longer hey were forced to discuss the matter and admit they were grow- ng ill with pure homesickness. They decided to keep the city ouse during the summer, but to return to the farm to live as soon s school closed.

So Mrs. Comstock would prepare breakfast and lunch and then lip away to the farm to make up beds in her plowed garden, lant seeds, trim and tend her flowers, and prepare the cabin for ccupancy. Then she would go home and make the evening as heerful as possible for Elnora; in these days she lived only for he girl.

Both of them were glad when the last of May came and the chools closed. They packed the books and clothing they wished o take into a wagon and walked across the fields to the old cabin. As they approached it, Mrs. Comstock said to Elnora: "You are ure you won't be lonely here?"

Elnora knew what she really meant.

"Quite sure," she said. "For a time last fall I was glad to be way, but that all wore out with the winter. Spring made me omesick as I could be. I can scarcely wait until we get back gain."

So they began that summer as they had begun all others—with ork. But both of them took a new joy in everything, and the iolin sang by the hour in the twilight.

CHAPTER XIX

Wherein Philip Ammon Gives a Ball in Honor of Edith Carr, and Hart Henderson Appears on the Scene

Edith Carr stood in a vine-enclosed side veranda of the Lak Shore Club House waiting while Philip Ammon gave some im portant orders. In a few days she would sail for Paris to select wonderful trousseau she had planned for her marriage in Octobe Tonight Philip was giving a club dance in her honor. He ha spent days in devising new and exquisite effects in decoration entertainment, and supper. Weeks before the favored guests ha been notified. Days before they had received the invitations ask ing them to participate in this entertainment by Philip Ammo in honor of Miss Carr. They spoke of it as "Phil's dance fo Edith!"

She could hear the rumble of carriages and the panting of auto mobiles as in a steady stream they rolled to the front entranc She could catch glimpses of floating draperies of gauze and lac the flash of jewels, and the passing of exquisite color. Everyon was newly arrayed in her honor in the loveliest clothing, and th most expensive jewels they could command. As she thought of she lifted her head a trifle higher and her eyes flashed proudly

She was robed in a French creation suggested and designed b Philip. He had said to her: "I know a competent judge who say the distinctive feature of June is her exquisite big night moths I want you to be the very essence of June that night, as you wi be the embodiment of love. Be a moth. The most beautiful o

hem is either the pale-green Luna or the Yellow Imperialis. Be
y moon lady, or my gold Empress."

He took her to the museum and showed her the moths. She
stantly decided on the yellow because she knew the shades
ould make her more startlingly beautiful than any other color.
o him she said: "A moon lady seems so far away and cold. I
ould be of earth and very near on that night. I choose the
mpress."

So she matched the colors exactly, wrote out the idea and
rwarded the order to Paquin. Tonight when Philip Ammon
ame for her, he stood speechless a minute and then silently
issed her hands.

For she stood tall, lithe, of grace inborn, her dark waving hair
igh piled and crossed by gold bands studded with amethyst and
t one side an enameled lavender orchid rimmed with diamonds,
hich flashed and sparkled. The soft yellow robe of lightest weight
elvet fitted her form perfectly, while from each shoulder fell a
reat velvet wing lined with lavender, and flecked with embroi-
ery of that color in imitation of the moth. Around her throat
as a wonderful necklace and on her arms were bracelets of gold
et with amethyst and rimmed with diamonds. Philip had said
hat her gloves, fan, and slippers must be lavender, because the
eet of the moth were that color. These accessories had been made
o order and embroidered with gold. It had been arranged that
er mother, Philip's, and a few best friends should receive his
uests. She was to appear when she led the grand march with
hilip Ammon. Miss Carr was positive that she would be the most
eautiful, and most exquisitely gowned woman present. In her
eart she thought of herself as "Imperialis Regalis," as the Yellow
mpress. In a few moments she would stun her world into feeling
as Philip Ammon had done, for she had taken pains that the
istory of her costume should be whispered to a few who would
ive it circulation. She lifted her head proudly and waited, for was
ot Philip planning something unusual and unsurpassed in her
onor? Then she smiled.

But of all the fragmentary thoughts crossing her brain the one
hat never came was that of Philip Ammon as the Emperor. Philip

the king of her heart; at least her equal in all things. She was th
Empress—yes, Philip was but a mere man, to devise entertai
ments, to provide luxuries, to humor whims, to kiss hands!

"Ah, my luck!" cried a voice behind her.

Edith Carr turned and smiled.

"I thought you were on the ocean," she said.

"I only reached the dock," replied the man, "when I had
letter that recalled me by the first limited."

"Oh! Important business?"

"The only business of any importance in all the world to m
I'm triumphant that I came. Edith, you are the most super
woman in every respect that I have ever seen. One glimpse
worth the whole journey."

"You like my dress?" She moved toward him and turned, lif
ing her arms. "Do you know what it is intended to represent?

"Yes, Polly Ammon told me. I knew when I heard about it ho
you would look, so I started a sleuth hunt, to get the first pee
Edith, I can become intoxicated merely with looking at yo
tonight."

He half-closed his eyes and smilingly stared straight at her. H
was taller than she, a lean man, with close-cropped light hai
steel-gray eyes, a square chin and "man of the world" written a
over him.

Edith Carr flushed. "I thought you realized when you wer
away that you were to stop that, Hart Henderson," she cried.

"I did, but this letter of which I tell you called me back
start it all over again."

She came a step closer. "Who wrote that letter, and what di
it contain concerning me?" she demanded.

"One of your most intimate chums wrote it. It contained th
hazard that possibly I had given up too soon. It said that in a
of petulance you had broken your engagement with Ammon twic
this winter, and he had come back because he knew you did n
really mean it. I thought deeply there on the dock when I rea
that, and my boat sailed without me. I argued that anything
weak as an engagement twice broken and patched up again wa
a mighty frail affair indeed, and likely to smash completely

any time, so I came on the run. I said once I would not see you marry any other man. Because I could not bear it, I planned to go into exile of any sort to escape that. I have changed my mind. I have come back to haunt you until the ceremony is over. Then I go, not before. I was insane!"

The girl laughed merrily. "Not half so insane as you are now, Hart!" she cried gaily. "You know that Philip Ammon has been devoted to me all my life. Now I'll tell you something else, because this looks serious for you. I love him with all my heart. Not while he lives shall he know it, and I will laugh at him if you tell him, but the fact remains: I intend to marry him, but no doubt I shall tease him constantly. It's good for a man to be uncertain. If you could see Philip's face at the quarterly return of his ring, you would understand the fun of it. You had better have taken your boat."

"Possibly," said Henderson calmly. "But you are the only woman in the world for me, and while you are free, as I now see my light, I remain near you. You know the old adage."

"But I'm not 'free'!" cried Edith Carr. "I'm telling you I am not. This night is my public acknowledgment that Phil and I are promised, as our world has surmised since we were children. That promise is an actual fact, because of what I just have told you. My little fits of temper don't count with Phil. He's been reared on them. In fact, I often invent one in a perfect calm to see him perform. He is the most amusing spectacle. But, please, please, do understand that I love him, and always shall, and that we shall be married."

"Just the same, I'll wait and see it an accomplished fact," said Henderson. "And Edith, because I love you, with the sort of love it is worth a woman's while to inspire, I want your happiness before my own. So I am going to say this to you, for I never dreamed you were capable of the feeling you have displayed for Phil. If you do love him, and have loved him always, a disappointment would cut you deeper than you know. Go careful from now on! Don't strain that patched engagement of yours any further. I've known Philip all my life. I've known him through boyhood, in college, and since. All men respect him. Where the

rest of us confess our sins, he stands clean. You can go to his arm with nothing to forgive. Mark this thing! I have heard him say 'Edith is my slogan,' and I have seen him march home strong in the strength of his love for you, in the face of temptations before which every other man of us fell. Before the gods! that ought to be worth something to a girl, if she really is the delicate, sensitive, refined thing she would have man believe. It would take a woman with the organism of an ostrich to endure some of the men here tonight, if she knew them as I do; but Phil is sound to the core. So this is what I would say to you: first, your instincts are right in loving him, why not let him feel it in the ways a woman knows? Second, don't break your engagement again. As men know the man, any of us would be afraid to the soul. He loves you, yes! He is long-suffering for you, yes! But men know he has a limit. When the limit is reached, he will stand fast, and all the powers can't move him. You don't seem to think it, but you can go too far!"

"Is that all?" laughed Edith Carr sarcastically.

"No, there is one thing more," said Henderson. "Here or hereafter, now and so long as I breathe, I am your slave. You can do anything you choose and know that I will kneel before you again. So carry this in the depths of your heart; now or at any time, in any place or condition, merely lift your hand, and I will come. Anything you want of me, that thing will I do. I am going to wait; if you need me, it is not necessary to speak; only give me the faintest sign. All your life I will be somewhere near you waiting for it."

"Idjit! You rave!" laughed Edith Carr. "How you would frighten me! What a bugbear you would raise! Be sensible and go find what keeps Phil. I was waiting patiently, but my patience is going. I won't look nearly so well as I do now when it is gone."

At that instant Philip Ammon entered. He was in full evening dress and exceptionally handsome. "Everything is ready," he said. "They are waiting for us to lead the march. It is formed."

Edith Carr smiled entrancingly. "Do you think I am ready?"

Philip looked what he thought, and offered his arm. Edith

Carr nodded carelessly to Hart Henderson, and moved away. Attendants parted the curtains and the Yellow Empress bowing right and left, swept the length of the ballroom and took her place at the head of the formed procession. The large open dancing pavilion was draped with yellow silk caught up with lilac flowers. Every corner was filled with bloom of those colors. The music was played by harpers dressed in yellow and violet, so the ball opened.

The midnight supper was served with the same colors and the last half of the programme was being danced. Never had girl been more complimented and petted in the same length of time than Edith Carr. Every minute she seemed to grow more worthy of praise. A partners' dance was called and the floor was filled with couples waiting for the music. Philip stood whispering delightful things to Edith facing him. From out of the night, in at the wide front entrance to the pavilion, there swept in slow wavering flight a large yellow moth and fluttered toward the center cluster of glaring electric lights. Philip Ammon and Edith Carr saw it at the same instant.

"Why, isn't that——?" she began excitedly.

"It's a Yellow Emperor! This is fate!" cried Philip. "The last one Elnora needs for her collection. I must have it! Excuse me!"

He ran toward the light. "Hats! Handkerchiefs! Fans! Anything!" he panted. "Everyone hold up something and stop that! It's a moth; I've got to catch it!"

"It's yellow! He wants it for Edith!" ran in a murmur around the hall. The girl's face flushed, while she bit her lip in vexation.

Instantly everyone began holding up something to keep the moth from flying back into the night. One fan held straight before it served, and the moth gently settled on it.

"Hold steady!" cried Philip. "Don't move for your life!" He rushed toward the moth, made a quick sweep and held it up between his fingers. "All right!" he called. "Thanks, everyone! Excuse me a minute."

He ran to the office.

"An ounce of gasoline, quick!" he ordered. "A cigar box, a cork, and the glue bottle."

He poured some glue into the bottom of the box, set the cork i it firmly, dashed the gasoline over the moth repeatedly, pinne it to the cork, poured the remainder of the liquid over it, close the box, and fastened it. Then he laid a bill on the counter.

"Pack that box with cork around it, in one twice its size, t securely and express to this address at once."

He scribbled on a sheet of paper and shoved it over.

"On your honor, will you do that faithfully as I say?" H asked the clerk.

"Certainly," was the reply.

"Then keep the change," called Philip as he ran back to th pavilion.

Edith Carr stood where he left her, thinking rapidly. She hear the murmur that arose when Philip started to capture the exqu site golden creature she was impersonating. She saw the flash surprise that went over unrestrained faces when he ran from th room, without even showing it to her. "The last one Elnor needs," rang in her ears. He had told her that he helped colle moths the previous summer, but she had understood that th Bird Woman, with whose work Miss Carr was familiar, wante them to put in a book.

He had spoken of a country girl he had met who played th violin wonderfully, and at times, he had shown a disposition exalt her as a standard of womanhood. Miss Carr had ignore what he said, and talked of something else. But that girl's nam had been Elnora. It was she who was collecting moths! No doub she was the competent judge who was responsible for the yello costume Philip had devised. Had Edith Carr been in her roon she would have torn off the dress at the thought.

Being in a circle of her best friends, which to her meant he keenest rivals and harshest critics, she grew rigid with anger. He breath hurt her paining chest. No one thought to speak to th musicians, and seeing the floor filled, they began the waltz. On part of the guests could see what had happened, and at once th others formed and commenced to dance. Gay couples came whir ing past her.

Edith Carr grew very white as she stood alone. Her lips turne

pale, while her dark eyes flamed with anger. She stood perfectly still where Philip had left her, and the approaching men guided their partners around her, while the girls, looking back, could be seen making exclamations of surprise.

The idolized only daughter of the Carr family hoped that she would drop dead from mortification, but nothing happened. She was too perverse to step aside and say that she was waiting for Philip. Then came Tom Levering dancing with Polly Ammon. Being in the scales with the Ammon family, Tom scented trouble from afar, so he whispered to Polly: "Edith is standing in the middle of the floor, and she's awful mad about something."

"That won't hurt her," laughed Polly. "It's an old pose of hers. She knows she looks superb when she is angry, so she keeps herself furious half the time on purpose."

"She looks like the mischief!" answered Tom. "Hadn't we better steer over and wait with her? She's the ugliest sight I ever saw!"

"Why, Tom!" cried Polly. "Stop, quickly!"

They hurried to Edith.

"Come, dear," said Polly. "We are going to wait with you until Phil returns. Let's go after a drink. I am so thirsty!"

"Yes, do!" begged Tom, offering his arm. "Let's get out of here until Phil comes."

There was the opportunity to laugh and walk away, but Edith Carr would not accept it.

"My betrothed left me here," she said. "Here I shall remain until he returns for me, and then—he will be my betrothed no longer!"

Polly grasped Edith's arm.

"Oh, Edith!" she implored. "Don't make a scene here, and tonight. Edith, this has been the loveliest dance ever given at the club house. Everyone is saying so, Edith! Darling, do come! Phil will be back in a second. He can explain! It's only a breath since I saw him go out. I thought he had returned."

As Polly panted these disjointed ejaculations, Tom Levering began to grow angry on her account.

"He has been gone just long enough to show every one of his

guests that he will leave me standing alone, like a neglected foo for any passing whim of his. Explain! His explanation woul sound well! Do you know for whom he caught that moth? It being sent to a girl he flirted with all last summer. It has ju occurred to me that the dress I am wearing is her suggestion. L him try to explain!"

Speech unloosed the fountain. She stripped off her gloves t free her hands. At that instant the dancers parted to admit Philip Instinctively they stopped as they approached and with wonde ing faces walled in Edith and Philip, Polly and Tom.

"Mighty good of you to wait!" cried Philip, his face showin his delight over his success in capturing the Yellow Emperor. " thought when I heard the music you were going on."

"How did you think I was going on?" demanded Edith Ca in frigid tones.

"I thought you would step aside and wait a few seconds fo me, or dance with Henderson. It was most important to have tha moth. It completes a valuable collection for a person who nee the money. Come!"

He held out his arms.

"I 'step aside' for no one!" stormed Edith Carr. "I await n other girl's pleasure! You may 'complete the collection' wit that!"

She drew her engagement ring from her finger and reached t place it on one of Philip's outstretched hands. He saw and dre back. Instantly Edith dropped the ring. As it fell, almost in stinctively Philip caught it in air. With amazed face he looke closely at Edith Carr. Her distorted features were scarcely recog nizable. He held the ring toward her.

"Edith, for the love of mercy, wait until I can explain," h begged. "Put on your ring and let me tell you how it is."

"I know perfectly 'how it is,' " she answered. "I never sha wear that ring again."

"You won't even hear what I have to say? You won't tak back your ring?" he cried.

"Never! Your conduct is infamous!"

"Come to think of it," said Philip deliberately, "it is 'infamou

o cut a girl, who has danced all her life, out of a few measures f a waltz. As for asking forgiveness for so black a sin as picking p a moth, and starting it to a friend who lives by collecting them, don't see how I could! I have not been gone three minutes by he clock, Edith. Put on your ring and finish the dance like a dear irl."

He thrust the glittering ruby into her fingers and again held ut his arms. She dropped the ring, and it rolled some distance rom them. Hart Henderson followed its shining course, and aught it before it was lost.

"You really mean it?" demanded Philip in a voice as cold as ers ever had been.

"You know I mean it!" cried Edith Carr.

"I accept your decision in the presence of these witnesses," aid Philip Ammon. "Where is my father?" The elder Ammon ith a distressed face hurried to him. "Father, take my place," aid Philip. "Excuse me to my guests. Ask all my friends to for- ive me. I am going away for awhile."

He turned and walked from the pavilion. As he went Hart lenderson rushed to Edith Carr and forced the ring into her ngers. "Edith, quick. Come, quick!" he implored. "There's just me to catch him. If you let him go that way, he never will re- rn in this world. Remember what I told you."

"Great prophet, aren't you, Hart?" she sneered. "Who wants im to return? If that ring is thrust upon me again I shall fling it to the lake. Signal the musicians to begin, and dance with me."

Henderson put the ring into his pocket, and began the dance. le could feel the muscular spasms of the girl in his arms, her face as cold and hard, but her breath burned with the scorch of ver. She finished the dance and all others, taking Phil's num- ers with Henderson, who had arrived too late to arrange a pro- ram. She left with the others, merely inclining her head as e passed Ammon's father taking his place, and entered the big uring car for which Henderson had telephoned. She sank limply to a seat and moaned softly.

"Shall I drive awhile in the night air?" asked Henderson.

She nodded. He instructed the chauffeur.

She raised her head in a few seconds. "Hart, I'm going
pieces," she said. "Won't you put your arm around me a litt
while?"

Henderson gathered her into his arms and her head fell on h
shoulder. "Closer!" she cried.

Henderson held her until his arms were numb, but he did n
know it. The tricks of fate are cruel enough, but there scarce
could have been a worse one than that: To care for a woman
he loved Edith Carr and have her given into his arms becau
she was so numb with misery over her trouble with another ma
that she did not know or care what she did. Dawn was streaki
the east when he spoke to her.

"Edith, it is growing light."

"Take me home," she said.

Henderson helped her up the steps and rang the bell.

"Miss Carr is ill," he said to the footman. "Arouse her ma
instantly, and have her prepare something hot as quickly as po
sible."

"Edith," he cried, "just a word. I have been thinking. It isn
too late yet. Take your ring and put it on. I will go find Phil
once and tell him you have, that you are expecting him, and
will come."

"Think what he said!" she cried. "He accepted my decision
final, 'in the presence of witnesses,' as if it were court. He ca
return it to me, if I ever wear it again."

"You think that now, but in a few days you will find that yo
feel very differently. Living a life of heartache is no joke, an
no job for a woman. Put on your ring and send me to tell him
come."

"No."

"Edith, there was not a soul who saw that, but sympathize
with Phil. It was ridiculous for you to get so angry over a thi
which was never intended for the slightest offence, and by
logical reasoning could have been so considered."

"Do you think that?" she demanded.

"I do!" said Henderson. "If you had laughed and stepp
aside an instant, or laughed and stayed where you were, Ph

vould have been back; or, if he needed punishment in your eyes, o have found me having one of his dances would have been nough. I was waiting. You could have called me with one look. But to publicly do and say what you did, my lady—I know Phil, nd I know you went too far. Put on that ring, and send him vord you are sorry, before it is too late."

"I will not! He shall come to me."

"Then God help you!" said Henderson, "for you are plunging nto misery whose depth you do not dream. Edith, I beg of ou——"

She swayed where she stood. Her maid opened the door and aught her. Henderson went down the hall and out to his car.

CHAPTER XX

Wherein the Elder Ammon Offers Advic and Edith Carr Experiences Regrets

PHILIP AMMON walked from among his friends a humiliated a a wounded man. Never before had Edith Carr appeared qu so beautiful. All evening she had treated him with unusual co sideration. Never had he loved her so deeply. Then in a f seconds everything was different. Seeing the change in her fa and hearing her meaningless accusations, killed something his heart. Warmth went out and a cold weight took its place. H even after that, he had offered the ring to her again, and ask her before others to reconsider. The answer had been further sult.

He walked, paying no heed to where he went. He had tra ersed many miles when he became aware that his feet had chos familiar streets. He was passing his home. Dawn was near, b the first floor was lighted. He staggered up the steps and w instantly admitted. The library door stood open, while his fath sat with a book pretending to read. At Philip's entrance t father scarcely glanced up.

"Come on!" he called. "I have just told Banks to bring me cup of coffee before I turn in. Have one with me!"

Philip sat beside the table and leaned his head on his han but he drank a cup of steaming coffee and felt better.

"Father," he said, "father, may I talk with you a little while

"Of course," answered Mr. Ammon. "I am not at all tir I think I must have been waiting in the hope that you wou

come. I want no one's version of this but yours. Tell me the traight of the thing, Phil."

Philip told all he knew, while his father sat in deep thought.

"On my life I can't see any occasion for such a display of tem-er, Phil. It passed all bounds of reason and breeding. Can't you hink of anything more?"

"I cannot!"

"Polly says everyone expected you to carry the moth you aught to Edith. Why didn't you?"

"She screams if a thing of that kind comes near her. She never as taken the slightest interest in them. I was in a big hurry. I idn't want to miss one minute of my dance with her. The moth as not so uncommon, but by a combination of bad luck it had ecome the rarest in America for a friend of mine, who is making collection to pay college expenses. For an instant last June the eries was completed; when a woman's uncontrolled temper ined this specimen and the search for it began over. A few days ter a pair was secured, and again the money was in sight for veral hours. Then an accident wrecked one-fourth of the col-ction. I helped replace those last June, all but this Yellow mperor which we could not secure, and we haven't been able find, buy or trade for one since. So my friend was compelled to ach this past winter instead of going to college. When that moth me flying in there tonight, it seemed to me like fate. All I ought of was, that to secure it would complete the collection nd secure the money. So I caught the Emperor and started it Elnora. I declare to you that I was not out of the pavilion over ree minutes at a liberal estimate. If I only had thought to eak to the orchestra! I was sure I would be back before enough uples gathered and formed for the dance."

The eyes of the father were very bright.

"The friend for whom you wanted the moth is a girl?" he ked indifferently, as he ran the book leaves through his fingers.

"The girl of whom I wrote you last summer, and told you out in the fall. I helped her all the time I was away."

"Did Edith know of her?"

"I tried many times to tell her, to interest her, but she was

so indifferent that it was insulting. She would not hear me

"We are neither one in any condition to sleep. Why don't yo begin at the first and tell me about this girl? To think of oth matters for a time may clear our vision for a sane solution of th Who is she, just what is she doing, and what is she like? Yo know I was reared among those Limberlost people, I can unde stand readily. What is her name and where does she live?"

Philip gave a man's version of the previous summer, while h father played with the book industriously.

"You are very sure as to her refinement and education?"

"In almost two months' daily association, could a man be m taken? She can far and away surpass Polly, Edith, or any girl our set on any common, high school, or supplementary branc and you know high schools have French, German, and physi now. Besides, she is a graduate of two other institutions. All h life she has been in the school of Hard Knocks. She has the bi gest, tenderest, most human heart I ever knew in a girl. She h known life in its most cruel phases, and instead of hardening he it has set her trying to save other people suffering. Then th nature position of which I told you; she graduated in the Scho of the Woods, before she secured that. The Bird Woman, who work you know, helped her there. Elnora knows more interesti things in a minute than any other girl I ever met knew in an hou provided you are a person who cares to understand plant an animal life."

The book leaves slid rapidly through his fingers as the fath drawled: "What sort of looking girl is she?"

"Tall as Edith, a little heavier, pink, even complexion, wi open blue-gray eyes with heavy black brows, and lashes so lo they touch her cheeks. She has a rope of waving, shining ha that makes a real crown on her head, and it appears almost red the light. She is as handsome as any fair woman I ever saw, b she doesn't know it. Every time anyone pays her a compliment her mother, who is a caution, discovers that, for some reason, t girl is a fright, so she has no appreciation of her looks."

"And you were in daily association two months with a girl li that! How about it, Phil?"

"If you mean, did I trifle with her, no!" cried Philip hotly. "I old her the second time I met her all about Edith. Almost every lay I wrote to Edith in her presence. Elnora gathered violets nd made a fancy basket to put them in for Edith's birthday. started to err in too open admiration for Elnora, but her mother rought me up with a whirl I never forgot. Fifty times a day in he swamps and forests Elnora made a perfect picture, but I either looked nor said anything. I never met any girl so down-ight noble in bearing and actions. I never hated anything as I ated leaving her, for we were dear friends, like two wholly con-enial men. Her mother was almost always with us. She knew ow much I admired Elnora, but so long as I concealed it from he girl, the mother did not care."

"Yet you left such a girl and came back wholehearted to Edith Carr!"

"Surely! You know how it has been with me about Edith all ny life."

"Yet the girl you picture is far her superior to an unprejudiced erson, when thinking what a man would require in a wife to be appy."

"I never have thought what I would 'require' to be happy! only thought whether I could make Edith happy. I have been n idiot! What I've borne you'll never know! Tonight is only ne of many outbursts like that, in varying and lesser degrees."

"Phil, I love you, when you say you have thought only of Edith! I happen to know that it is true. You are my only son, nd I have had a right to watch you closely. I believe you utterly. Anyone who cares for you as I do, and has had my years of ex-erience in this world over yours, knows that in some ways, to-ight would be a blessed release, if you could take it; but you annot! Go to bed now, and rest. Tomorrow, go back to her nd fix it up."

"You heard what I said when I left her! I said it because some-hing in my heart died a minute before that, and I realized that was my love for Edith Carr. Never again will I voluntarily face uch a scene. If she can act like that at a ball, before hundreds, ver a thing of which I thought nothing at all, she would go into

actual physical fits and spasms, over some of the household cris I've seen the mater meet with a smile. Sir, it is truth that I ha thought only of her up to the present. Now, I will admit I a thinking about myself. Father, did you see her? Life is too sho and it can be too sweet, to throw it away in a battle with an unr strained woman. I am no fighter—where a girl is concerned, an way. I respect and love her or I do nothing. Never again is eith respect or love possible between me and Edith Carr. Whenever think of her in the future, I will see her as she was tonight. B I can't face the crowd just yet. Could you spare me a few days

"It is only ten days until you were to go north for the sum mer, go now."

"I don't want to go north. I don't want to meet people know. There, the story would precede me. I do not need pityin glances or rough condolences. I wonder if I could not hide Uncle Ed's in Wisconsin for awhile?"

The book closed suddenly. The father leaned across the tab and looked into the son's eyes.

"Phil, are you sure of what you just have said?"

"Perfectly sure!"

"Do you think you are in any condition to decide tonight?"

"Death cannot return to life, father. My love for Edith Car is dead. I hope never to see her again."

"If I thought you could be certain so soon! But, come to thin of it, you are very like me in many ways. I am with you in thi Public scenes and disgraces I would not endure. It would be ove with me, were I in your position, that I know."

"It is done for all time," said Philip Ammon. "Let us no speak of it further."

"Then, Phil," the father leaned closer and looked at the so tenderly, "Phil, why don't you go to the Limberlost?"

"Father!"

"Why not? No one can comfort a hurt heart like a tende woman; and, Phil, have you ever stopped to think that you ma have a duty in the Limberlost, if you are free? I don't know! only suggest it. But, for a country schoolgirl, unaccustomed t men, two months with a man like you might well awaken feel

ngs of which you do not think. Because you were safeguarded
s no sign the girl was. She might care to see you. You can soon
ell. With you, she comes next to Edith, and you have made it
lear to me that you appreciate her in many ways above. So I re-
eat it, why not go to the Limberlost?"

A long time Philip Ammon sat in deep thought. At last he
aised his head.

"Well, why not!" he said. "Years could make me no surer
nan I am now, and life is short. Please ask Banks to get me
ome coffee and toast, and I will bathe and dress so I can take
ne early train."

"Go to your bath. I will attend to your packing and every-
ning. And Phil, if I were you, I would leave no addresses."

"Not an address!" said Philip. "Not even Polly."

When the train pulled out, the elder Ammon went home to find
Iart Henderson waiting.

"Where is Phil?" he demanded.

"He did not feel like facing his friends at present, and I am
ist back from driving him to the station. He said he might go to
.am, or Patagonia. He would leave no address."

Henderson almost staggered. "He's not gone? And left no ad-
ress? You don't mean it! He'll never forgive her!"

"Never is a long time, Hart," said Mr. Ammon. "And it seems
ven longer to those of us who are well acquainted with Phil.
ast night was not the last straw. It was the whole straw-stack. It
ushed Phil so far as she is concerned. He will not see her again
oluntarily, and he will not forget if he does. You can take it
om him, and from me, we have accepted the lady's decision.
Vill you have a cup of coffee?"

Twice Henderson opened his lips to speak of Edith Carr's
espair. Twice he looked into the stern, inflexible face of Mr.
mmon and could not betray her. He held out the ring.

"I have no instructions as to that," said the elder Ammon,
awing back. "Possibly Miss Carr would have it as a keepsake."

"I am sure not," said Henderson curtly.

"Then suppose you return it to Peacock. I will 'phone him.
e will give you the price of it, and you might add it to the chil-

dren's Fresh Air Fund. We would be obliged if you would c
that. No one here cares to handle the object."

"As you choose," said Henderson. "Good morning!"

Then he went to his home, but he could not think of slee
He ordered breakfast, but he could not eat. He paced the libra
for a time, but it was too small. Going on the streets he walke
until exhausted, then he called a hansom and was driven to h
club. He had thought himself familiar with every depth of su
fering; that night had taught him that what he felt for himself w
not to be compared with the anguish which wrung his heart ov
the agony of Edith Carr. He tried to blame Philip Ammon, bu
being an honest man, Henderson knew that was unjust. The fau
lay wholly with her, but that only made it harder for him, as h
realized it would in time for her. As he sauntered into the roo
an attendant hurried to him.

"You are wanted most urgently at the 'phone, Mr. Hende
son," he said. "You have had three calls from Main 5770."

Henderson shivered as he picked down the receiver and gav
the call.

"Is that you, Hart?" came Edith's voice.

"Yes."

"Did you find Phil?"

"No."

"Did you try?"

"Yes. As soon as I left you I went straight there."

"Wasn't he home yet?"

"He has been home and gone again."

"Gone!"

The cry tore Henderson's heart.

"Shall I come and tell you, Edith?"

"No! Tell me now."

"When I reached the house Banks said Mr. Ammon and Phi
were out in the motor, so I waited. Mr. Ammon came back soon
Edith, are you alone?"

"Yes. Go on!"

"Call your maid. I can't tell you until someone is with you."

"Tell me instantly!"

"Edith, he said he had been to the station. He said Phil had arted to Siam or Patagonia, he didn't know which, and left no ddress. He said——"

Distinctly Henderson heard her fall. He set the buzzer ringing, nd in a few seconds heard voices, so he knew she had been found. hen he crept into a private den and shook with a hard, nervous ill.

The next day Edith Carr started on her trip to Europe. Henerson felt certain she hoped to meet Philip there. He was sure ie would be disappointed, though he had no idea where Amion could have gone. But after much thought he decided he ould see Edith soonest by remaining at home, so he spent the mmer in Chicago.

CHAPTER XXI

Wherein Philip Ammon Returns to the Limberlost, and Elnora Studies the Situation

"We must be thinking about supper, mother," said Elnora, whi she set the wings of a Cecropia with much care. "It seems as if can't get enough to eat, or enough of being at home. I enjoye that city house. I don't believe I could have done my work if had been compelled to walk back and forth. I thought at fir I never wanted to come here again. Now, I feel as if I could n live anywhere else."

"Elnora," said Mrs. Comstock, "there's someone coming dow the road."

"Coming here, do you think?"

"Yes, coming here, I suspect."

Elnora glanced quickly at her mother and then turned to th road as Philip Ammon reached the gate.

"Careful, mother!" the girl instantly warned. "If you chang your treatment of him a hair's breadth, he will suspect. Com with me to meet him."

She dropped her work and sprang up.

"Well, of all the delightful surprises!" she cried.

She was a trifle thinner than during the previous summer. O her face there was a more mature, patient look, but the su struck her bare head with the same ray of red gold. She wor one of the old blue gingham dresses, open at the throat and rolle to the elbows. Mrs. Comstock did not appear at all the sam

woman, but Philip saw only Elnora; heard only her greeting. He aught both hands where she offered but one.

"Elnora," he cried, "if you were engaged to me, and we were t a ball, among hundreds, where I offended you very much, and lidn't even know I had done anything, and if I asked you be- ore all of them to allow me to explain, to forgive me, to wait, would your face grow distorted and unfamiliar with anger? Would you drop my ring on the floor and insult me repeatedly? Oh, Elnora, would you?"

Elnora's big eyes seemed to leap, while her face grew very white. She drew away her hands.

"Hush, Phil! Hush!" she protested. "That fever has you again! You are dreadfully ill. You don't know what you are saying."

"I am sleepless and exhausted; I'm heartsick; but I am well s I ever was. Answer me, Elnora, would you?"

"Answer nothing!" cried Mrs. Comstock. "Answer nothing! Hang your coat there on your nail, Phil, and come split some kindling. Elnora, clean away that stuff, and set the table. Can't you see the boy is starved and tired? He's come home to rest and at a decent meal. Come on, Phil!"

Mrs. Comstock marched away, and Philip hung his coat n its old place and followed. Out of sight and hearing she turned n him.

"Do you call yourself a man or a hound?" she flared.

"I beg your pardon——" stammered Philip Ammon.

"I should think you would!" she ejaculated. "I'll admit you id the square thing and were a man last summer, though I'd ked it better if you'd faced up and told me you were promised; ut to come back here babying, and take hold of Elnora like that, nd talk that way because you have had a fuss with your girl, don't tolerate. Split that kindling and I'll get your supper, and ien you better go. I won't have you working on Elnora's big eart, because you have quarreled with someone else. You'll have patched up in a week and be gone again, so you can go right way."

"Mrs. Comstock, I came to ask Elnora to marry me."

"The more fool you, then!" cried Mrs. Comstock. "This time

yesterday you were engaged to another woman, no doubt. No
for some little flare-up you come racing here to use Elnora as
tool to spite the other girl. A week of sane living, and you w
be sorry and ready to go back to Chicago, or, if you really a
man enough to be sure of yourself, she will come to claim you. Sh
has her rights. An engagement of years is a serious matter, an
not broken for a whim. If you don't go, she'll come. Then, whe
you patch up your affairs and go sailing away together, whe
does my girl come in?"

"I am a lawyer, Mrs. Comstock," said Philip. "It appeals
me as beneath your ordinary sense of justice to decide a case wit
out hearing the evidence. It is due me that you hear me first."

"Hear your side!" flashed Mrs. Comstock. "I'd a heap sig
rather hear the girl!"

"I wish to my soul that you had heard and seen her last nigh
Mrs. Comstock," said Ammon. "Then, my way would be clear.
never even thought of coming here today. I'll admit I woul
have come in time, but not for many months. My father se
me."

"Your father sent you! Why?"

"Father, mother, and Polly were present last night. They, an
all my friends, saw me insulted and disgraced in the worst e
hibition of uncontrolled temper any of us ever witnessed. All
them knew it was the end. Father liked what I had told him
Elnora, and he advised me to come here, so I came. If she do
not want me, I can leave instantly, but, oh I hoped she woul
understand!"

"You people are not splitting wood," called Elnora.

"Oh yes we are!" answered Mrs. Comstock. "You set out th
things for biscuit, and lay the table." She turned again to Philip
"I know considerable about your father," she said. "I have me
your uncle's family frequently this winter. I've heard your Aun
Anna say that she didn't at all like Miss Carr, and that she an
all your family secretly hoped that something would happen t
prevent your marrying her. That chimes right in with your sayin
that your father sent you here. I guess you better speak you
piece."

Philip gave his version of the previous night.

"Do you believe me?" he finshed.

"Yes," said Mrs. Comstock.

"May I stay?"

"Oh, it looks all right for you, but what about her?"

"Nothing, so far as I am concerned. Her plans were all made o start to Europe today. I suspect she is on the way by this time. lnora is very sensible, Mrs. Comstock. Hadn't you better let her ecide this?"

"The final decision rests with her, of course," admitted Mrs. omstock. "But look you one thing! She's all I have. As Solomon ys, 'she is the one child, the only child of her mother.' I've suf-red enough in this world that I fight against any suffering which reatens her. So far as I know you've always been a man, and ou may stay. But if you bring tears and heartache to her, don't ave the assurance to think I'll bear it tamely. I'll get right up nd fight like a catamount, if things go wrong for Elnora!"

"I have no doubt but you will," replied Philip, "and I don't lame you in the least if you do. I have the utmost devotion to ffer Elnora, a good home, fair social position, and my family ill love her dearly. Think it over. I know it is sudden, but my ther advised it."

"Yes, I reckon he did!" said Mrs. Comstock dryly. "I guess stead of me being the catamount, you had the genuine article up Chicago, masquerading in peacock feathers, and posing as a ne lady, until her time came to scratch. Human nature seems be the same the world over. But I'd give a pretty to know that cret thing you say you don't, that set her raving over your just tching a moth for Elnora. You might get that crock of straw-rries in the spring house."

They prepared and ate supper. Afterward they sat in the ar-or and talked, or Elnora played until time for Philip to go.

"Will you walk to the gate with me?" he asked Elnora as he ose.

"Not tonight," she answered lightly. "Come early in the morn-g if you like, and we will go over to Sleepy Snake Creek and nt moths and gather dandelions for dinner."

Philip leaned toward her. "May I tell you tomorrow wh
I came?" he asked.

"I think not," replied Elnora. "The fact is, I don't care wh
you came. It is enough for me that we are your very good friend
and that in trouble, you have found us a refuge. I fancy we ha
better live a week or two before you say anything. There is
possibility that what you have to say may change in that lengt
of time."

"It will not change one iota!" cried Philip.

"Then it will have the grace of that much age to give
some small touch of flavor," said the girl. "Come early in th
morning."

She lifted the violin and began to play.

"Well bless my soul!" ejaculated the astounded Mrs. Com
stock. "To think I was worrying for fear you couldn't take ca
of yourself!"

Elnora laughed while she played.

"Shall I tell you what he said?"

"Nope! I don't want to hear it!" said Elnora. "He is only si
hours from Chicago. I'll give her a week to find him and fi
it up, if he stays that long. If she doesn't put in an appearanc
then, he can tell me what he wants to say, and I'll take my tim
to think it over. Time in plenty, too! There are three of us i
this, and one must be left with a sore heart for life. If the decisio
rests with me I propose to be very sure that it is the one wh
deserves such hard luck."

The next morning Philip came early, dressed in the outin
clothing he had worn the previous summer, and aside from
slight paleness seemed very much the same as when he left. Elnor
met him on the old footing, and for a week life went on exactly a
it had the previous summer. Mrs. Comstock made mental not
and watched in silence. She could see that Elnora was on a strai
though she hoped Philip would not. The girl grew restless as th
week drew to a close. Once when the gate clicked she suddenl
lost color and moved nervously. Billy came down the walk.

Philip leaned toward Mrs. Comstock and said: "I am expressl
forbidden to speak to Elnora as I would like. Would you min

elling her for me that I had a letter from my father this morning aying that Miss Carr is on her way to Europe for the summer?"

"Elnora," said Mrs. Comstock promptly, "I have just heard hat Carr woman is on her way to Europe, and I wish to my racious stars she'd stay there!"

Philip Ammon shouted, but Elnora arose hastily and went to eet Billy. They came into the arbor together and after speaking Mrs. Comstock and Philip, Billy said: "Uncle Wesley and I ound something funny, and we thought you'd like to see."

"I don't know what I should do without you and Uncle Wesley help me," said Elnora. "What have you found now?"

"Something I couldn't bring. You have to come to it. I tried get one and I killed it. They are a kind of insecty things, and ey got a long tail that is three fine hairs. They stick those hairs ght into the hard bark of trees, and if you pull, the hairs stay st and it kills the bug."

"We will come at once," laughed Elnora. "I know what they e, and I can use some in my work."

"Billy, have you been crying?" inquired Mrs. Comstock.

Billy lifted a chastened face. "Yes, ma'am," he replied. "This s been the worst day."

"What's the matter with the day?"

"The day is all right," admitted Billy. "I mean every single ing has gone wrong with me."

"Now that is too bad!" sympathized Mrs. Comstock.

"Began early this morning," said Billy. "All Snap's fault, too."

"What has poor Snap been doing?" demanded Mrs. Comstock, r eyes beginning to twinkle.

"Digging for woodchucks, like he always does. He gets up at o o'clock to dig for them. He was coming in from the woods tired and covered thick with dirt. I was going to the barn with e pail of water for Uncle Wesley to use in milking. I had to set wn the pail to shut the gate so the chickens wouldn't get into e flower beds, and old Snap stuck his dirty nose into the water d began to lap it down. I knew Uncle Wesley wouldn't use that, I had to go 'way back to the cistern for more, and it pumps ful hard. Made me mad, so I threw the water on Snap."

"Well, what of it?"

"Nothing, if he'd stood still. But it scared him awful, and whe he's afraid he goes a-humping for Aunt Margaret. When he g right up against her he stiffened out and gave a big shake. Yo oughter seen the nice blue dress she had put on to go to On basha!"

Mrs. Comstock and Philip laughed, but Elnora put her arm around the boy. "Oh Billy!" she cried. "That was too bad!"

"She got up early and ironed that dress to wear because it w cool. Then, when it was all dirty, she wouldn't go, and she wante to real bad." Billy wiped his eyes. "That ain't all, either," h added.

"We'd like to know about it, Billy," suggested Mrs. Comstoc struggling with her face.

"Cos she couldn't go to the city, she's most worked herself death. She's done all the dirty, hard jobs she could find. She fixing her grape juice now."

"Sure!" cried Mrs. Comstock. "When a woman is disappointe she always works like a dog to gain sympathy!"

"Well, Uncle Wesley and I are sympathizing all we know ho without her working so. I've squeezed until I almost busted get the juice out from the seeds and skins. That's the hard pa Now, she has to strain it through white flannel and seal it bottles, and it's good for sick folks. Most wish I'd get sick myse so I could have a glass. It's so good!"

Elnora glanced swiftly at her mother.

"I worked so hard," continued Billy, "that she said if I wou throw the leavings in the woods, then I could come after yo to see about the bugs. Do you want to go?"

"We will all go," said Mrs. Comstock. "I am mightily interest in those bugs myself."

From afar commotion could be seen at the Sinton hom Wesley and Margaret were running around wildly and peculi sounds filled the air.

"What's the trouble?" asked Philip, hurrying to Wesley.

"Cholera!" groaned Sinton. "My hogs are dying like flies."

Margaret was softly crying. "Wesley, can't I fix something ho

Can't we do anything? It means several hundred dollars and our winter meat."

"I never saw stock taken so suddenly and so hard," said Wesley. I have 'phoned for the veterinary to come as soon as he can get here."

All of them hurried to the feeding pen into which the pigs seemed to be gathering from the woods. Among the common stock were big white beasts of pedigree which were Wesley's pride at county fairs. Several of these rolled on their backs, pawing the air feebly and emitting little squeaks. A huge Berkshire sat on his haunches, slowly shaking his head, the water dropping from his eyes, until he, too, rolled over with faint grunts. A pair crossing the yard on wavering legs collided, and attacked each other in anger, only to fall, so weak they scarcely could squeal. A fine snowy Plymouth Rock rooster, after several attempts, flew to the fence, balanced with great effort, wildly flapped his wings and started a guttural crow, but fell sprawling among the pigs, too helpless to stand.

"Did you ever see such a dreadful sight?" sobbed Margaret. Billy climbed on the fence, took one long look and turned an astounded face to Wesley.

"Why, them pigs is drunk!" he cried. "They act just like my pa!"

Wesley turned to Margaret.

"Where did you put the leavings from that grape juice?" he demanded.

"I sent Billy to throw it in the woods."

"Billy——" began Wesley.

"Threw it just where she told me to," cried Billy. "But some of the pigs came by there coming into the pen, and some were loose in the fence corners."

"Did they eat it?" demanded Wesley.

"They just chanked into it," replied Billy graphically. "They pushed, and squealed, and fought over it. You couldn't blame them! It was the best stuff I ever tasted!"

"Margaret," said Wesley, "run 'phone that doctor he won't be

needed. Billy, take Elnora and Mr. Ammon to see the bug
Katharine, suppose you help me a minute."

Wesley took the clothes basket from the back porch and starte
in the direction of the cellar. Margaret returned from the tele
phone.

"I just caught him," she said. "There's that much saved. Wh
Wesley, what are you going to do?"

"You go sit on the front porch a little while," said Wesley
"You will feel better if you don't see this."

"Wesley," cried Margaret, aghast. "Some of that wine is te
years old. There are days and days of hard work in it, and
couldn't say how much sugar. Dr. Ammon keeps people aliv
with it when nothing else will stay on their stomachs."

"Let 'em die, then!" said Wesley. "You heard the boy, didn
you?"

"It's a cold process. There's not a particle of fermentatio
about it."

"Not a particle of fermentation! Great day, Margaret! Loo
at those pigs!"

Margaret took a long look. "Leave me a few bottles fo
mincemeat," she wavered.

"Not a smell for any use on this earth! You heard the boy
He shan't say, when he grows to manhood, that he learned t
like it here!"

Wesley threw away the wine, Mrs. Comstock cheerfully a
sisting. Then they walked to the woods to see and learn abou
the wonderful insects. The day ended with a big supper at Sin
tons', and then they went to the Comstock cabin for a concer
Elnora played beautifully that night. When the Sintons left sh
kissed Billy with particular tenderness. She was so moved tha
she was kinder to Philip than she had intended to be, and Elno
as an antidote to a disappointed lover was a decided success i
any mood.

However strong the attractions of Edith Carr had been, onc
the bond was finally broken, Philip Ammon could not help reali
ing that Elnora was the superior woman, and that he was fo
tunate to have escaped, when he regarded his ties strongest. Ever

day, while working with Elnora, he saw more to admire. He grew very thankful that he was free to try to win her, and impatient to justify himself to her.

Elnora did not evince the slightest haste to hear what he had to say, but waited the week she had set, in spite of Philip's hourly manifest impatience. When she did consent to listen, Philip felt before he had talked five minutes, that she was putting herself in Edith Carr's place, and judging him from what the other girl's standpoint would be. That was so disconcerting, he did not plead his cause nearly so well as he had hoped, for when he ceased Elnora sat in silence.

"You are my judge," he said at last. "What is your verdict?"

"If I could hear her speak from her heart as I just have heard you, then I could decide," answered Elnora.

"She is on the ocean," said Philip. "She went because she knew she was wholly in the wrong. She had nothing to say, or she would have remained."

"That sounds plausible," reasoned Elnora, "but it is pretty difficult to find a woman in an affair that involves her heart with nothing at all to say. I fancy if I could meet her, she would say several things. I should love to hear them. If I could talk with her three minutes, I could tell what answer to make you."

"Don't you believe me, Elnora?"

"Unquestioningly," answered Elnora. "But I would believe her also. If only I could meet her I soon would know."

"I don't see how that is to be accomplished," said Philip, "but I am perfectly willing. There is no reason why you should not meet her, except that she probably would lose her temper and insult you."

"Not to any extent," said Elnora calmly. "I have a tongue of my own, while I am not without some small sense of personal values."

Philip glanced at her and began to laugh. Very different of facial formation and coloring, Elnora at times closely resembled her mother. She joined in his laugh ruefully.

"The point is this," she said. "Someone is going to be hurt, most dreadfully. If the decision as to whom it shall be rests with

me, I must know it is the right one. Of course, no one ever hinte
it to you, but you are a very attractive man, Philip. You ar
mighty good to look at, and you have a trained, refined mind, tha
makes you most interesting. For years Edith Carr has felt that yo
were hers. Now, how is she going to change? I have been think
ing—thinking deep and long, Phil. If I were in her place, I simpl
could not give you up, unless you had made yourself unworthy o
love. Undoubtedly, you never seemed so desirable to her as jus
now, when she is told she can't have you. What I think is tha
she will come to claim you yet."

"You overlook the fact that it is not in a woman's power t
throw away a man and pick him up at pleasure," said Philip wit
some warmth. "She publicly and repeatedly cast me off. I ac
cepted her decision as publicly as it was made. You have don
all your thinking from a wrong viewpoint. You seem to have a
idea that it lies with you to decide what I shall do, that if you sa
the word, I shall return to Edith. Put that thought out of you
head! Now, and for all time to come, she is a matter of indiffe
ence to me. She killed all feeling in my heart for her so completel
that I do not even dread meeting her.

"If I hated her, or was angry with her, I could not be sure th
feeling would not die. As it is, she has deadened me into a creatu
of indifference. So you just revise your viewpoint a little, Elnora
Cease thinking it is for you to decide what I shall do, and tha
I will obey you. I make my own decisions in reference to an
woman, save you. The question you are to decide is whether
may remain here, associating with you as I did last summer; bu
with the difference that it is understood that I am free; that it
my intention to care for you all I please, to make you return m
feeling for you if I can. There is just one question for you to de
cide, and it is not triangular. It is between us. May I remain? Ma
I love you? Will you give me the chance to prove what I think o
you?"

"You speak very plainly," said Elnora.

"This is the time to speak plainly," said Philip Ammon. "Ther
is no use in allowing you to go on threshing out a problem whic
does not exist. If you do not want me here, say so and I will g

Of course, I warn you before I start, that I will come back. I won't yield without the stiffest fight it is in me to make. But drop thinking it lies in your power to send me back to Edith Carr. If she were the last woman in the world, and I the last man, I'd jump off the planet before I would give her further opportunity to exercise her temper on me. Narrow this to us, Elnora. Will you take the place she vacated? Will you take the heart she threw away? I'd give my right hand and not flinch, if I could offer you my life, free from any contact with hers, but that is not possible. I can't undo things which are done. I can only profit by experience and build better in the future."

"I don't see how you can be sure of yourself," said Elnora. "I don't see how I could be sure of you. You loved her first, you never can care for me anything like that. Always I'd have to be afraid you were thinking of her and regretting."

"Folly!" cried Philip. "Regretting what? That I was not married to a woman who was liable to rave at me any time or place, without my being conscious of having given offence? A man does relish that! I am likely to pine for more!"

"You'd be thinking she'd learned a lesson. You would think it wouldn't happen again."

"No, I wouldn't be 'thinking,'" said Philip. "I'd be everlastingly sure! I wouldn't risk what I went through that night again, not to save my life! Just you and me, Elnora. Decide for us."

"I can't!" cried Elnora. "I am afraid!"

"Very well," said Philip. "We will wait until you feel that you can. Wait until fear vanishes. Just decide now whether you would rather have me go for a few months, or remain with you. Which shall it be, Elnora?"

"You can never love me as you did her," wailed Elnora.

"I am happy to say I cannot," replied he. "I've cut my matrimonial teeth. I'm cured of wanting to swell in society. I'm over being proud of a woman for her looks alone. I have no further use for lavishing myself on a beautiful, elegantly dressed creature, who thinks only of self. I have learned that I am a common man. I admire beauty and beautiful clothing quite as much as I ever

did; but, first, I want an understanding, deep as the lowest recess of my soul, with the woman I marry. I want to work for you to plan for you, to build you a home with every comfort, to give you all good things I can, to shield you from every evil. I want to interpose my body between yours and fire, flood, or famine. I want to give you everything; but I hate the idea of getting nothing at all on which I can depend in return. Edith Carr had only good looks to offer, and when anger overtook her, beauty went out like a snuffed candle.

"I want you to love me. I want some consideration. I even crave respect. I've kept myself clean. So far as I know how to be I am honest and scrupulous. It wouldn't hurt me to feel that you took some interest in these things. Rather fierce temptations strike a man, every few days, in this world. I can keep decent, for a woman who cares for decency, but when I do, I'd like to have the fact recognized, by just enough of a show of appreciation that I could see it. I am tired of this one-sided business. After this, I want to get a little in return for what I give. Elnora, you have love, tenderness, and honest appreciation of the finest in life. Take what I offer, and give what I ask."

"You do not ask much," said Elnora.

"As for not loving you as I did Edith," continued Philip, "as I said before, I hope not! I have a newer and a better idea of loving. The feeling I offer you was inspired by you. It is a Limberlost product. It is as much bigger, cleaner, and more wholesome than any feeling I ever had for Edith Carr, as you are bigger than she, when you stand before your classes and in calm dignity explain the marvels of the Almighty, while she stands on a ball-room floor, and gives way to uncontrolled temper. Ye gods, Elnora, if you could look into my soul, you would see it leap and rejoice over my escape! Perhaps it isn't decent, but it's human; and I'm only a common human being. I'm the gladdest man alive that I'm free! I would turn somersaults and yell if I dared. What an escape! Stop straining after Edith Carr's viewpoint and take a look from mine. Put yourself in my place and try to study out how I feel.

"I am so happy I grow religious over it. Fifty times a day I

catch myself whispering, 'My soul is escaped!' As for you, take all the time you want. If you prefer to be alone, I'll take the next train and stay away as long as I can bear it, but I'll come back. You can be most sure of that. Straight as your pigeons to their loft, I'll come back to you, Elnora. Shall I go?"

"Oh, what's the use to be extravagant?" murmured Elnora.

CHAPTER XXII

Wherein Philip Ammon Kneels to Elnora, and Strangers Come to the Limberlost

THE month which followed was a reproduction of the previous June. There were long moth hunts, days of specimen gathering, wonderful hours with great books, big dinners all of them helped to prepare, and perfect nights filled with music. Everything was as it had been, with the difference that Philip was now an avowed suitor. He missed no opportunity to advance himself in Elnora's graces. At the end of the month he was no nearer any sort of understanding with her than he had been at the beginning. He reveled in the privilege of loving her, but he got no response. Elnora believed in his love, yet she hesitated to accept him, because she could not forget Edith Carr.

One afternoon early in July, Philip came across the fields through the Comstock woods, and entered the garden. He inquired for Elnora at the back door and was told that she was reading under the willow. He went around the west end of the cabin to her. She sat on a rustic bench they had made and placed beneath a drooping branch. He had not seen her before in the dress she was wearing. It was clinging mull of pale green, trimmed with narrow ruffles and touched with knots of black velvet; a simple dress, but vastly becoming. Every tint of her bright hair, her luminous eyes, her red lips, and her rose-flushed face, neck, and arms grew a little more vivid with the delicate green setting.

He stopped short. She was so near, so temptingly sweet, he

ost control. He went to her with a half-smothered cry after that rst long look, dropped on one knee beside her and reached an rm behind her to the bench back, so that he was very near. He aught her hands.

"Elnora!" he cried tensely, "end it now! Say this strain is ver. I pledge you that you will be happy. You don't know! If ou only would say the word, you would awake to new life and reat joy! Won't you promise me now, Elnora?"

The girl sat staring into the west woods, while strong in her es was her father's look of seeing something invisible to others. hilip's arm slipped from the bench around her. His fingers closed rmly over hers. "Elnora," he pleaded, "you know me well ough. You have had time in plenty. End it now. Say you will e mine!" He gathered her closer, pressing his face against hers, s breath on her cheek. "Can't you quite promise yet, my girl of e Limberlost?"

Elnora shook her head. Instantly he released her.

"Forgive me," he begged. "I had no intention of thrusting my- lf upon you, but, Elnora, you are the veriest Queen of Love is afternoon. From the tips of your toes to your shining crown, worship you. I want no woman save you. You are so wonderful is afternoon, I couldn't help urging. Forgive me. Perhaps it was mething that came this morning for you. I wrote Polly to send May we try if it fits? Will you tell me if you like it?"

He drew a little white velvet box from his pocket and showed r a splendid emerald ring.

"It may not be right," he said. "The inside of a glove finger not very accurate for a measure, but it was the best I could do. wrote Polly to get it, because she and mother are home from e East this week, but next they will go on to our cottage in the rth, and no one knows what is right quite so well as Polly." He d the ring in Elnora's hand. "Dearest," he said, "don't slip at on your finger; put your arms around my neck and promise e, all at once and abruptly, or I'll keel over and die of sheer y."

Elnora smiled.

"I won't! Not all those venturesome things at once; but, Phil,

I'm ashamed to confess that ring simply fascinates me. It is t most beautiful one I ever saw, and do you know that I nev owned a ring of any kind in my life? Would you think me u womanly if I slip it on for a second, before I can say for sur Phil, you know I care! I care very much! You know I will t you the instant I feel right about it."

"Certainly you will," agreed Philip promptly. "It is your rig to take all the time you choose. I can't put that ring on y until it means a bond between us. I'll shut my eyes and you t it on, so we can see if it fits."

Philip turned his face toward the west woods and tightly clos his eyes. It was a boyish thing to do, and it caught the hesitati girl in the depths of her heart as the boy element in a man ev appeals to a motherly woman. Before she quite realized what s was doing, the ring slid on her finger. With both arms she caug Philip and drew him to her breast, holding him closely. H head drooped over his, her lips were on his hair. So an instan then her arms dropped. He lifted a convulsed, white face.

"Dear Lord!" he whispered. "You—you didn't mean tha Elnora! You—— What made you do it?"

"You—you looked so boyish!" panted Elnora. "I didn't mea it! I—I forgot that you were older than Billy. Look—look at t ring!"

" 'The Queen can do no wrong,' " quoted Philip between h set teeth. "But don't you do that again, Elnora, unless you c mean it. Kings are not so good as queens, and there is a limit wi all men. As you say, we will look at your ring. It seems very love to me. Suppose you leave it on until time for me to go. Please d I have heard of mute appeals; perhaps it will plead for me. am wild for your lips this afternoon. I am going to take yo hands."

He caught both of them and covered them with kisses.

"Elnora," he said, "will you be my wife?"

"I must have a little more time," she whispered. "I must b absolutely certain, for when I say yes, and give myself to yo only death shall part us. I would not give you up. So I wa a little more time—but, I think I will."

"Thank you," said Philip. "If at any time you feel that you ave reached a decision, will you tell me? Will you promise me tell me instantly, or shall I keep asking you until the time mes?"

"You make it difficult," said Elnora. "But I will promise you at. Whenever the last doubt vanishes, I will let you know in- antly—if I can."

"Would it be difficult for you?" whispered Ammon.

"I—I don't know," faltered Elnora.

"It seems as if I can't be man enough to put this thought aside d give up this afternoon," said Philip. "I am ashamed of my- lf, but I can't help it. I am going to ask God to make that last oubt vanish before I go this night. I am going to believe that g will plead for me. I am going to hope that doubt will dis- pear suddenly. I will be watching. Every second I will be atching. If it happens and you can't speak, give me your hand. st the least movement toward me, I will understand. Would help you to talk this over with your mother? Shall I call her? all I——?"

Honk! Honk! Honk! Hart Henderson set the horn of the big tomobile going as it shot from behind the trees lining the Brush- ood road. The picture of a vine-covered cabin, a large drooping e, a green-clad girl and a man bending over her very closely shed into view. Edith Carr caught her breath with a snap. lly Ammon gave Tom Levering a quick touch and wickedly nked at him.

Several days before, Edith had returned from Europe suddenly. e and Henderson had called at the Ammon residence saying at they were going to motor down to the Limberlost to see ilip a few hours, and urged that Polly and Tom accompany em. Mrs. Ammon knew that her husband would disapprove of e trip, but it was easy to see that Edith Carr had determined going. So the mother thought it better to have Polly along to pport Philip than to allow him to confront Edith unexpectedly d alone. Polly was full of spirit. She did not relish the thought Edith as a sister. Always they had been in the same set, always lith, because of greater beauty and wealth, had patronized

Polly. Although it had rankled, she had borne it sweetly. But tw
days before, her father had extracted a promise of secrecy, giv
her Philip's address and told her to send him the finest emera
ring she could select. Polly knew how that ring would be use
What she did not know was that the girl who accompanied h
went back to the store afterward, made an excuse to the cle
that she had been sent to be absolutely sure that the address w
right, and so secured it for Edith Carr.

Two days later Edith had induced Hart Henderson to ta
her to Onabasha. By the aid of maps they located the Comsto
land and passed it, merely to see the place. Henderson hated th
trip, and implored Edith not to take it, but she made no effort
conceal from him what she suffered, and it was more than
could endure. He pointed out that Philip had gone away witho
leaving an address, because he did not wish to see her, or any
them. But Edith was so sure of her power, she felt certain Phi
needed only to see her to succumb to her beauty as he always h
done, while now she was ready to plead for forgiveness. So th
came down the Brushwood road, and Henderson had just sa
to Edith beside him: "This should be the Comstock land on o
left."

A minute later the wood ended, while the sunlight, as alwa
pitiless, etched with distinctness the scene at the west end of t
cabin. Instinctively, to save Edith, Henderson set the horn blo
ing. He had thought to drive to the city, but Polly Ammon arc
crying: "Phil! Phil!" Tom Levering was on his feet shouting a
waving, while Edith in her most imperial manner ordered him
turn into the lane leading through the woods beside the cabi

"Find some way for me to have a minute alone with he
she commanded as he stopped the car.

"That is my sister Polly, her fiancé Tom Levering, a friend
mine named Henderson, and——" began Philip.

"——and Edith Carr," volunteered Elnora.

"And Edith Carr," repeated Philip Ammon. "Elnora, be bra
for my sake. Their coming can make no difference in any wa
I won't let them stay but a few minutes. Come with me!"

"Do I seem scared?" inquired Elnora serenely. "This is w

u haven't had your answer. I have been waiting just six weeks
r that motor. You may bring them to me at the arbor."
Philip glanced at her and broke into a laugh. She had not lost
lor. Her self-possession was perfect. She deliberately turned
d walked toward the grape arbor, while he sprang over the
st fence and ran to the car.
Elnora standing in the arbor entrance made a perfect picture,
med in green leaves and tendrils. No matter how her heart
hed, it was good to her, for it pumped steadily, and kept her
eeks and lips suffused with color. She saw Philip reach the
r and gather his sister into his arms. Past her he reached a hand
Levering, then to Edith Carr and Henderson. He lifted his
ter to the ground, and assisted Edith to alight. Instantly, she
pped beside him, and Elnora's heart played its first trick.
She could see that Miss Carr was splendidly beautiful, while
e moved with the hauteur and grace supposed to be the pre-
gatives of royalty. And she had instantly taken possession of
ilip. But he also had a brain which was working with rapidity.
e knew Elnora was watching, so he turned to the others.
"Give her up, Tom!" he cried. "I didn't know I wanted to
the little nuisance so badly, but I do. How are father and
ther? Polly, didn't the mater send me something?"
"She did!" said Polly Ammon, stopping on the path and lift-
g her chin as a little child, while she drew away her veil.
Philip caught her in his arms and stooped for his mother's kiss.
"Be good to Elnora!" he whispered.
"Umhu!" assented Polly. And aloud—"Look at that ripping
en and gold symphony! I never saw such a beauty! Thomas
quith Levering, you come straight here and take my hand!"
Edith's move to compel Philip to approach Elnora beside her
d been easy to see; also its failure. Henderson stepped into
ilip's place as he turned to his sister. Instead of taking Polly's
nd Levering ran to open the gate. Edith passed through first,
t Polly darted in front of her on the run, with Phil holding her
n, and swept up to Elnora. Polly looked for the ring and saw it.
at settled matters with her.
"You lovely, lovely, darling girl!" she cried, throwing her arms

around Elnora and kissing her. With her lips close Elnora's e
Polly whispered, "Sister! Dear, dear sister!"

Elnora drew back, staring at Polly in confused amazement. S
was a beautiful girl, her eyes were sparkling and dancing, and
she turned to make way for the others, she kept one of Elnor
hands in hers. Polly would have dropped dead in that instant
Edith Carr could have killed with a look, for not until then did s
realize that Polly would even many a slight, and that it had be
a great mistake to bring her.

Edith bowed low, muttered something and touched Elnor
fingers. Tom took his cue from Polly.

"I always follow a good example," he said, and before anyo
could divine his intention he kissed Elnora as he gripped her ha
and cried: "Mighty glad to meet you! Like to meet you a doz
times a day, you know!"

Elnora laughed and her heart pumped smoothly. They had a
complished their purpose. They had let her know they were th
through compulsion, but on her side. In that instant only pity w
in Elnora's breast for the flashing dark beauty, standing wi
smiling face while her heart must have been filled with exceedi
bitterness. Elnora stepped back from the entrance.

"Come into the shade," she urged. "You must have found
warm on these country roads. Won't you lay aside your dust-co
and have a cool drink? Philip, would you ask mother to com
and bring that pitcher from the spring house?"

They entered the arbor exclaiming at the dim, green coolne
There was plenty of room and wide seats around the sides, a tab
in the center, on which lay a piece of embroidery, magazin
books, the moth apparatus, and the cyanide jar containing seve
specimens. Polly rejoiced in the cooling shade, slipped off h
duster, removed her hat, rumpled her pretty hair and seated he
self to indulge in the delightful occupation of paying off o
scores. Tom Levering followed her example. Edith took a seat b
refused to remove her hat and coat, while Henderson stood
the entrance.

"There goes something with wings! Should you have that
cried Levering.

He seized a net from the table and raced across the garden after butterfly. He caught it and came back mightily pleased with mself. As the creature struggled in the net, Elnora noted a re-ılsed look on Edith Carr's face. Levering helped the situation :autifully.

"Now what have I got?" he demanded. "Is it just a common ıe that everyone knows and you don't keep, or is it the rarest rd off the perch?"

"You must have had practice, you took that so perfectly," said nora. "I am sorry, but it is quite common and not of a kind I ep. Suppose all of you see how beautiful it is and then it may go ctar hunting again."

She held the butterfly where all of them could see, showed its per and under wing colors, answered Polly's questions as to ıat it ate, how long it lived, and how it died. Then she put it to Polly's hand saying: "Stand there in the light and loosen ur hold slowly and easily."

Elnora caught a brush from the table and began softly stroking e creature's sides and wings. Delighted with the sensation the tterfly opened and closed its wings, clinging to Polly's soft little gers, while everyone cried out in surprise. Elnora laid aside the ush, and the butterfly sailed away.

"Why, you are a wizard! You charm them!" marveled vering.

"I learned that from the Bird Woman," said Elnora. "She takes t brushes and coaxes butterflies and moths into the positions e wants for the illustrations of a book she is writing. I have lped her often. Most of the rare ones I find go to her."

"Then you don't keep all you take?" questioned Levering.

"Oh, dear, no!" cried Elnora. "Not a tenth! For myself, a pair each kind to use in illustrating the lectures I give in the city ıools in the winter, and one pair for each collection I make. ıe might as well keep the big night moths of June, for they ly live four or five days anyway. For the Bird Woman, I only ve rare ones she has not yet secured. Sometimes I think it is uel to take such creatures from freedom, even for an hour, but s the only way to teach the masses of people how to distinguish

the pests they should destroy, from the harmless ones of gre beauty. Here comes mother with something cool to drink."

Mrs. Comstock came deliberately, talking to Philip as she a proached. Elnora gave her one searching look, but could discov only an extreme brightness of eye to denote any unusual feelir She wore one of her lavender dresses, while her snowy hair w high piled. She had taken care of her complexion, and her fa had grown fuller during the winter. She might have been anyon mother with pride, and she was perfectly at ease.

Polly instantly went to her and held up her face to be kisse Mrs. Comstock's eyes twinkled and she made the greeti hearty.

The drink was compounded of the juices of oranges and berr from the garden. It was cool enough to frost glasses and pitch and delicious to dusty tired travelers. Soon the pitcher was emp and Elnora picked it up and went to refill it. While she was go Henderson asked Philip about some trouble he was having wi his car. They went to the woods and began a minute examinati to find a defect which did not exist. Polly and Levering we having an animated conversation with Mrs. Comstock. Henders saw Edith arise, follow the garden path next the woods a stand waiting under the willow which Elnora would pass on h return. It was for that meeting he had made the trip. He g down on the ground, tore up the car, worked, asked for help, a kept Philip busy screwing bolts and applying the oil can. All t time Henderson kept an eye on Edith and Elnora under t willow. But he took pains to lay the work he asked Philip to where that scene would be out of his sight. When Elnora ca around the corner with the pitcher, she found herself facing Edi Carr.

"I want a minute with you," said Miss Carr.

"Very well," replied Elnora, walking on.

"Set the pitcher on the bench there," commanded Edith Ca as if speaking to a servant.

"I prefer not to offer my visitors a warm drink," said Elno "I'll come back if you really wish to speak with me."

"I came solely for that," said Edith Carr.

"It would be a pity to travel so far in this dust and heat for nothing. I'll only be gone a second."

Elnora placed the pitcher before her mother. "Please serve his," she said. "Miss Carr wishes to speak with me."

"Don't you pay the least attention to anything she says," cried Polly. "Tom and I didn't come here because we wanted to. We only came to checkmate her. I hoped I'd get the opportunity to say a word to you, and now she has given it to me. I just want to tell you that she threw Phil over in a perfectly horrid way. She hasn't any right to lay the ghost of a claim to him, has she, Tom?"

"Nary a claim," said Tom Levering earnestly. "Why, even you, Polly, couldn't serve me as she did Phil, and ever get me back again. If I were you, Miss Comstock, I'd send my mother to talk with her and I'd stay here."

Tom had gauged Mrs. Comstock rightly. Polly put her arms round Elnora. "Let me go with you, dear," she begged.

"I promised I would speak with her alone," said Elnora, "and he must be considered. But thank you, very much."

"How I shall love you!" exulted Polly, giving Elnora a parting hug.

The girl slowly and gravely walked back to the willow. She could not imagine what was coming, but she was promising herself that she would be very patient and control her temper.

"Will you be seated?" she asked politely.

Edith Carr glanced at the bench, while a shudder shook her. "No. I prefer to stand," she said. "Did Mr. Ammon give you the ring you are wearing, and do you consider yourself engaged to him?"

"By what right do you ask such personal questions as those?" inquired Elnora.

"By the right of a betrothed wife. I have been promised to Philip Ammon ever since I wore short skirts. All our lives we have expected to marry. An agreement of years cannot be broken in the insane moment. Always he has loved me devotedly. Give me ten minutes with him and he will be mine for all time."

"I seriously doubt that," said Elnora. "But I am willing that you should make the test. I will call him."

"Stop!" commanded Edith Carr. "I told you that it was you came to see."

"I remember," said Elnora.

"Mr. Ammon is my betrothed," continued Edith Carr. "I e pect to take him back to Chicago with me."

"You expect considerable," murmured Elnora. "I will raise r objection to your taking him, if you can—but, I tell you frankl I don't think it possible."

"You are so sure of yourself as that," scoffed Edith Carr. "O hour in my presence will bring back the old spell, full force. W belong to each other. I will not give him up."

"Then it is untrue that you twice rejected his ring, repeated insulted him, and publicly renounced him?"

"That was through you!" cried Edith Carr. "Phil and I nev had been so near and so happy as we were on that night. It w your clinging to him for things that caused him to desert m among his guests, while he tried to make me await your pleasur I realize the spell of this place, for a summer season. I understan what you and your mother have done to inveigle him. I know th your hold on him is quite real. I can see just how you have worke to ensnare him!"

"Men would call that lying," said Elnora calmly. "The secon time I met Philip Ammon he told me of his engagement to yo and I respected it. I did by you as I would want you to do by m He was here parts of each day, almost daily last summer. Th Almighty is my witness that never once, by word or look, did ever make the slightest attempt to interest him in my person personality. He wrote you frequently in my presence. He forg the violets for which he asked to send you. I gathered them an carried them to him. I sent him back to you in unswerving d votion, and the Almighty is also my witness that I *could* hav changed his heart last summer, if I had tried. I wisely left th work for you. All my life I shall be glad that I lived and worke on the square. That he ever would come back to me free, by yo act, I never dreamed. When he left me I did not hope or expe to see him again," Elnora's voice fell soft and low, "and, behol You sent him—and free!"

"You exult in that!" cried Edith Carr. "Let me tell you he is not free! We have belonged for years. We always shall. If you cling to him, and hold him to rash things he has said and done, because he thought me still angry and unforgiving with him, you will ruin all our lives. If he married you, before a month you would read heart-hunger for me in his eyes. He could not love me as he has done, and give me up for a little scene like that!"

"There is a great poem," said Elnora, "one line of which reads, 'For each man kills the thing he loves.' Let me tell you that a woman can do that also. He did love you—that I concede. But you killed his love everlastingly, when you disgraced him in public. Killed it so completely he does not even feel resentment toward you. Today, he would do you a favor, if he could; but love you, no! That is over!"

Edith Carr stood truly regal and filled with scorn. "You are mistaken! Nothing on earth could kill that!" she cried, and Elnora saw that the girl really believed what she said.

"You are very sure of yourself!" said Elnora.

"I have reason to be sure," answered Edith Carr. "We have lived and loved too long. I have had years with him to match against your days. He is mine! His work, his ambitions, his friends, his place in society are with me. You may have a summer charm for a sick man in the country; if he tried placing you in society, he soon would see you as others will. It takes birth to position, schooling, and endless practice to meet social demands gracefully. You would put him to shame in a week."

"I scarcely think I should follow your example so far," said Elnora dryly. "I have a feeling for Philip that would prevent my hurting him purposely, either in public or private. As for managing a social career for him he never mentioned that he desired such a thing. What he asked of me was that I should be his wife. I understood that to mean that he desired me to keep him a clean house, serve him digestible food, mother his children, and give him loving sympathy and tenderness."

"Shameless!" cried Edith Carr.

"To which of us do you intend that adjective to apply?" inquired Elnora. "I never was less ashamed in all my life. Please

remember I am in my own home, and your presence here is not o my invitation."

Miss Carr lifted her head and struggled with her veil. She wa very pale and trembling violently, while Elnora stood serene, faint smile on her lips.

"Such vulgarity!" panted Edith Carr. "How can a man lik Philip endure it?"

"Why don't you ask him?" inquired Elnora. "I can call hin with one breath; but, if he judged us as we stand, I should no be the one to tremble at his decision. Miss Carr, you have bee quite plain. You have told me in carefully selected words wha you think of me. You insult my birth, education, appearance, an home. I assure you I am legitimate. I will pass a test examinatio with you on any high school or supplementary branch, or Frenc or German. I will take a physical examination beside you. I wi face any social emergency you can mention with you. I am ac quainted with a whole world in which Philip Ammon is keenl interested, that you scarcely know exists. I am not afraid to fac any audience you can get together anywhere with my violin. am not repulsive to look at, and I have a wholesome regard fo the proprieties and civilities of life. Philip Ammon never aske anything more of me, why should you?"

"It is plain to see," cried Edith Carr, "that you took him whe he was hurt and angry and kept his wound wide open. Oh, wha have you not done against me?"

"I did not promise to marry him when an hour ago he aske me, and offered me this ring, because there was so much feelin in my heart for you, that I knew I never could be happy, i I felt that in any way I had failed in doing justice to your interests I did slip on this ring, which he had just brought, because never owned one, and it is very beautiful, but I made him n promise, nor shall I make any, until I am quite, quite sure, tha you fully realize he never would marry you if I sent him awa this hour."

"You know perfectly that if your puny hold on him wer broken, if he were back in his home, among his friends, and where he was meeting me, in one short week he would be mine again, a

he always has been. In your heart you don't believe what you say. You don't dare trust him in my presence. You are afraid to allow him out of your sight, because you know what the results would be. Right or wrong, you have made up your mind to ruin him and me, and you are going to be selfish enough to do it. But——"

"That will do!" said Elnora. "Spare me the enumeration of how I will regret it. I shall regret nothing. I shall not act until I know there will be nothing to regret. I have decided on my course. You may return to your friends."

"What do you mean?" demanded Edith Carr.

"That is my affair," replied Elnora. "Only this! When your opportunity comes, seize it! Any time you are in Philip Ammon's presence, exert the charms of which you boast, and take him. I grant you are justified in doing it if you can. I want nothing more than I want to see you marry Philip if he wants you. He is just across the fence under that automobile. Go spread your meshes and exert your wiles. I won't stir to stop you. Take him to Onabasha, and to Chicago with you. Use every art you possess. If the old charm can be revived I will be the first to wish both of you well. Now, I must return to my visitors. Kindly excuse me."

Elnora turned and went back to the arbor. Edith Carr followed the fence and passed through the gate into the west woods where she asked Henderson about the car. As she stood near him he whispered: "Take Phil back to Onabasha with us."

"I say, Ammon, can't you go to the city with us and help me find a shop where I can get this pinion fixed?" asked Henderson. "We want to lunch and start back by five. That will get us home about midnight. Why don't you bring your automobile here?"

"I am a working man," said Philip. "I have no time to be out motoring. I can't see anything the matter with your car, myself; but, of course you don't want to break down in the night, on strange roads, with women on your hands. I'll see."

Philip went into the arbor, where Polly took possession of his lap, fingered his hair, and kissed his forehead and lips.

"When are you coming to the cottage, Phil?" she asked. "Come soon, and bring Miss Comstock for a visit. All of us will be so glad to have her."

Philip beamed on Polly. "I'll see about that," he said. "Sound pretty good. Elnora, Henderson is in trouble with his automobile He wants me to go to Onabasha with him to show him where th doctor lives, and make repairs so he can start back this evening. I will take about two hours. May I go?"

"Of course, you must go," she said, laughing lightly. "You can't leave your sister. Why don't you return to Chicago with them? There is plenty of room, and you could have a fine visit."

"I'll be back in just two hours," said Philip. "While I am gone, you be thinking over what we were talking of when the folk came."

"Miss Comstock can go with us as well as not," said Polly "That back seat was made for three, and I can sit on your lap."

"Come on! Do come!" urged Philip instantly, and Tom Lever ing joined him, but Henderson and Edith silently waited at th gate.

"No, thank you," laughed Elnora. "That would crowd you and it's warm and dusty. We will say good-bye here."

She offered her hand to all of them, and when she came to Philip she gave him one long steady look in the eyes, then shook hands with him also.

CHAPTER XXIII

Wherein Elnora Reaches a Decision, and Freckles and the Angel Appear

WELL, she came, didn't she?" remarked Mrs. Comstock to lnora as they watched the automobile speed down the road. As turned the Limberlost corner, Philip arose and waved to them.

"She hasn't got him yet, anyway," said Mrs. Comstock, taking eart. "What's that on your finger, and what did she say to you?"

Elnora explained about the ring as she drew it off.

"I have several letters to write, then I am going to change my ress and walk down toward Aunt Margaret's for a little exercise. may meet some of them, and I don't want them to see this ring. ou keep it until Philip comes," said Elnora. "As for what Miss arr said to me, many things, two of importance: one, that I cked every social requirement necessary for the happiness of hilip Ammon, and that if I married him I would see inside a onth that he was ashamed of me——"

"Aw, shockins!" scorned Mrs. Comstock. "Go on!"

"The other was that she has been engaged to him for years, at he belongs to her, and she refuses to give him up. She said at if he were in her presence one hour, she would have him nder a mysterious thing she calls 'her spell' again; if he were here she could see him for one week, everything would be made). It is her opinion that he is suffering from wounded pride, and at the slightest concession on her part will bring him to his knees fore her."

Mrs. Comstock giggled. "I do hope the boy isn't weak-kneed,"

she said. "I just happened to be passing the west window thi afternoon——"

Elnora laughed. "Nothing save actual knowledge ever woul have made me believe there was a girl in all this world so in fatuated with herself. She speaks casually of her power over men and boasts of 'bringing a man to his knees' as complacently as would pick up a net and say: 'I am going to take a butterfly.' Sh honestly believes that if Philip were with her a short time she coul rekindle his love for her and awaken in him every particle of th old devotion. Mother, the girl is honest! She is absolutely sincere She so believes in herself and the strength of Phil's love for her that all her life she will believe in and brood over that thought unless she is taught differently. So long as she thinks that, sh will nurse wrong ideas and pine over her blighted life. She mus be taught that Phil is absolutely free, and yet he will not go t her."

"But how on earth are you proposing to teach her that?"

"The way will open."

"Lookey here, Elnora!" cried Mrs. Comstock. "That Carr gir is the handsomest dark woman I ever saw. She's got to the plac where she won't stop at anything. Her coming here proves that I don't believe there was a thing the matter with that automobile I think that was a scheme she fixed up to get Phil where sh could see him alone, as she worked to see you. If you are goin deliberately to put Philip under her influence again, you've go to brace yourself for the possibility that she may win. A man is a weak mortal, where a lovely woman is concerned, and he neve denied that he loved her once. You may make yourself downrigh miserable."

"But mother, if she won, it wouldn't make me half so miserable as to marry Phil myself, and then read hunger for her in his eyes Someone has got to suffer over this. If it proves to be me, I'll bea it, and you'll never hear a whisper of complaint from me. I know the real Philip Ammon better in our months of work in the fields than she knows him in all her years of society engagements. So she shall have the hour she asked, many, many of them, enough

› make her acknowledge that she is wrong. Now I am going to rite my letters and take my walk."

Elnora threw her arms around her mother and kissed her re-eatedly. "Don't you worry about me," she said. "I will get along l right, and whatever happens, I always will be your girl and ou my darling mother."

She left two sealed notes on her desk. Then she changed her ress, packed a small bundle which she dropped with her hat om the window beside the willow, and softly went downstairs. Irs. Comstock was in the garden. Elnora picked up the hat nd bundle, hurried down the road a few rods, then climbed the nce and entered the woods. She took a diagonal course, and ter a long walk reached a road two miles west and one south. here she straightened her clothing, put on her hat and a thin ark veil and waited the passing of the next trolley. She left it at e first town and took a train for Fort Wayne. She made that oint just in time to climb on the evening train north, as it lled from the station. It was after midnight when she left the r at Grand Rapids, and went into the depot to await the ming of day.

Tired out, she laid her head on her bundle and fell asleep on a at in the women's waiting-room. Long after light she was vakened by the roar and rattle of trains. She washed, rearranged r hair and clothing, and went into the general waiting-room to id her way to the street. She saw him as he entered the door. here was no mistaking the tall, lithe figure, the bright hair, the an, brown-splotched face, the steady gray eyes. He was dressed r traveling, and carried a light overcoat and a bag. Straight him Elnora went speeding.

"Oh, I was just starting to find you!" she cried.

"Thank you!" he said.

"You are going away?" she panted.

"Not if I am needed. I have a few minutes. Can you be telling e briefly?"

"I am the Limberlost girl to whom your wife gave the dress r Commencement last spring, and both of you sent lovely gifts.

There is a reason, a very good reason, why I must be hidden fo a time, and I came straight to you—as if I had a right."

"You have!" answered Freckles. "Any boy or girl who eve suffered one pang in the Limberlost has a claim to the best dro of blood in my heart. You needn't be telling me anything mor The Angel is at our cottage on Mackinac. You shall tell her an play with the babies while you want shelter. This way!"

They breakfasted in a luxurious car, talked over the swamp the work of the Bird Woman; Elnora told of her nature lecture in the schools, and soon they were good friends. In the evenin they left the train at Mackinaw City and crossed the Straits b boat. Sheets of white moonlight flooded the water and paved molten path across the breast of it straight to the face of the moo

The island lay a dark spot on the silver surface, its tall tre sharply outlined on the summit, and a million lights blinke around the shore. The night guns boomed from the white fort an a dark sentinel paced the ramparts above the little city tucke down close to the water. A great tenor summering in the nort came out on the upper deck of the big boat, and baring his hea faced the moon and sang: "Oh, the moon shines bright on my ol Kentucky home!" Elnora thought of the Limberlost, of Philip and her mother, and almost choked with the sobs that would aris in her throat. On the dock a woman of exquisite beauty swep into the arms of Terence O'More.

"Oh, Freckles!" she cried. "You've been gone a month!"

"Four days, Angel, only four days by the clock," remonstrate Freckles. "Where are the children?"

"Asleep! Thank goodness! I'm worn to a thread. I never sa such inventive, active children. I can't keep track of them!"

"I have brought you help," said Freckles. "Here is the Limbe lost girl in whom the Bird Woman is interested. Miss Comstoc needs a rest before beginning her school work for next year, s she came to us."

"You dear thing! How good of you!" cried the Angel. "W shall be so happy to have you!"

In her room that night, in a beautiful cottage furnished wit every luxury, Elnora lifted a tired face to the Angel.

"Of course, you understand there is something back of this?" he said. "I must tell you."

"Yes," agreed the Angel. "Tell me! If you get it out of your ystem, you will stand a better chance of sleeping."

Elnora stood brushing the copper-bright masses of her hair as ıe talked. When she finished the Angel was almost hysterical.

"You insane creature!" she cried. "How crazy of you to leave im to her! I know both of them. I have met them often. She may e able to make good her boast. But it is perfectly splendid of ou! And, after all, really it is the only way. I can see that. I ink it is what I should have done myself, or tried to do. I don't ow that I could have done it! When I think of walking away nd leaving Freckles with a woman he once loved, to let her see if ıe can make him love her again, oh, it gives me a graveyard eart. No, I never could have done it! You are bigger than I ever as. I should have turned coward, sure."

"I am a coward," admitted Elnora. "I am soul-sick! I am raid I shall lose my senses before this is over. I didn't want to me! I wanted to stay, to go straight into his arms, to bind my-lf with his ring, to love him with all my heart. It wasn't my ult that I came. There was something inside that just pushed e. She is beautiful——"

"I quite agree with you!"

"You can imagine how fascinating she can be. She used no ts on me. Her purpose was to cower me. She found she could ot do that, but she did a thing which helped her more: she oved that she was honest, perfectly sincere in what she thought. ıe believes that if she merely beckons to Philip, he will go to her. I am giving her the opportunity to learn from him what he ll do. She never will believe it from anyone else. When she is tisfied, I shall be also."

"But, child! Suppose she wins him back!"

"That is the supposition with which I shall eat and sleep for e coming few weeks. Would one dare ask for a peep at the bies before going to bed?"

"Now, you are perfect!" announced the Angel. "I never should ve liked you all I can, if you had been content to go to sleep

in this house without asking to see the babies. Come this way. W
named the first boy for his father, of course, and the girl for Au
Alice. The next boy is named for my father, and the baby for t
Bird Woman. After this we are going to branch out."

Elnora began to laugh.

"Oh, I suspect there will be quite a number of them," said t
Angel serenely. "I am told the more there are the less trouble th
make. The big ones take care of the little ones. We want a lar
family. This is our start."

She entered a dark room and held aloft a candle. She went
the side of a small white iron bed in which lay a boy of eig
and another of three. They were perfectly formed, rosy childre
the elder a replica of his mother, the other very like. Then th
came to a cradle where a baby girl of almost two slept sound
and made a picture.

"But just see here!" said the Angel. She threw the light on
sleeping girl of six. A mass of red curls swept the pillow. Li
and feature the face was that of Freckles. Without asking, Elno
knew the color and expression of the closed eyes. The Ang
handed Elnora the candle, and stooping, straightened the child
body. She ran her fingers through the bright curls, and light
touched the aristocratic little nose.

"The supply of freckles holds out in my family, you see!" s
said. "Both of the girls will have them, and the second boy a few

She stood an instant longer, then bending, ran her hand caress
ingly down a rosy bare leg, while she kissed the babyish red mout
There had been some reason for touching all of them, the kiss f
on the lips which were like Freckles's.

To Elnora she said a tender good night, whispering brav
words of encouragement and making plans to fill the days to com
Then she went away. An hour later there was a light tap on th
girl's door.

"Come!" she called as she lay staring into the dark.

The Angel felt her way to the bedside, sat down and too
Elnora's hands.

"I just had to come back to you," she said. "I have been tellin

reckles, and he is almost hurting himself with laughing. I didn't
ink it was funny, but he does. He thinks it's the funniest thing
at ever happened. He says that to run away from Mr. Ammon,
hen you had made him no promise at all, when he wasn't
re of you, won't send him home to her; it will set him hunting
u! He says if you had combined the wisdom of Solomon,
crates, and all the remainder of the wise men, you couldn't
ve chosen any course that would have sealed him to you so
rely. He feels that now Mr. Ammon will perfectly hate her for
ming down there and driving you away. And you went to give
r the chance she wanted. Oh, Elnora! It is becoming funny! I
e it, too!"

The Angel rocked on the bedside. Elnora faced the dark in
ence.

"Forgive me," gulped the Angel. "I didn't mean to laugh. I
dn't think it was funny, until all at once it came to me. Oh,
ar! Elnora, it *is* funny! I've got to laugh!"

"Maybe it is," admitted Elnora, "to others; but it isn't very
nny to me. And it won't be to Philip, or to mother."

That was very true. Mrs. Comstock had been slightly prepared
r stringent action of some kind, by what Elnora had said. The
other instantly had guessed where the girl would go, but nothing
as said to Philip. That would have been to invalidate Elnora's
t in the beginning, and Mrs. Comstock knew her child well
ough to know that she never would marry Philip unless she
t it right that she should. The only way was to find out, and
nora had gone to seek the information. There was nothing to
but wait until she came back, and her mother was not in the
st uneasy but that the girl would return brave and self-reliant,
always.

Philip Ammon hurried back to the Limberlost, strong in the
pe that now he might take Elnora into his arms and receive
r promise to become his wife. His first shock of disappointment
me when he found her gone. In talking with Mrs. Comstock
learned that Edith Carr had made an opportunity to speak
th Elnora alone. He hastened down the road to meet her, com-

ing back alone, an agitated man. Then search revealed the note His read:

DEAR PHILIP:

I find that I am never going to be able to answer your question this afternoon fairly to all of us, when you are with me. So I am g ing away a few weeks to think over matters alone. I shall not t you, or even mother, where I am going, but I shall be safe, w cared for, and happy. Please go back home and live among yo friends, just as you always have done, and on or before the first September, I will write you where I am, and what I have decide Please do not blame Edith Carr for this, and do not avoid her. hope you will call on her and be friends. I think she is very sor and covets your friendship at least. Until September, then, as ev

ELNORA.

Mrs. Comstock's note was much the same. Philip was ill wi disappointment. In the arbor he laid his head on the tab among the implements of Elnora's loved work, and gulped dov dry sobs he could not restrain. Mrs. Comstock never had lik him so well. Her hand involuntarily crept toward his dark hea then she drew back. Elnora would not want her to do anythi whatever to influence him.

"What am I going to do to convince Edith Carr that I do n love her, and Elnora that I am hers?" he demanded.

"I guess you have to figure that out yourself," said Mrs. Co stock. "I'd be glad to help you if I could, but it seems to be to you."

Philip sat a long time in silence. "Well, I have decided!" said abruptly. "Are you perfectly sure Elnora had plenty of mon and a safe place to go?"

"Absolutely!" answered Mrs. Comstock. "She has been taki care of herself ever since she was born, and she always has co out all right, so far; I'll stake all I'm worth on it, that she alwa will. I don't know where she is, but I'm not going to worry abo her safety."

"I can't help worrying!" cried Philip. "I can think of fi things that may happen to her when she thinks she is safe. This distracting! First, I am going to run up to see my father. The

I'll let you know what we have decided. Is there anything I can do for you?"

"Nothing!" said Mrs. Comstock.

But the desire to do something for him was so strong with her she scarcely could keep her lips closed or her hands quiet. She longed to tell him what Edith Carr had said, how it had affected Elnora, and to comfort him as she felt she could. But loyalty to the girl held her. If Elnora truly felt that she could not decide until Edith Carr was convinced, then Edith Carr would have to yield or triumph. It rested with Philip. So Mrs. Comstock kept silent, while Philip took the night limited, a bitterly disappointed man.

By noon the next day he was in his father's offices. They had a long conference, but did not arrive at much until the elder Ammon suggested sending for Polly. Anything that might have happened could be explained after Polly had told of the private conference between Edith and Elnora.

"Talk about lovely women!" cried Philip Ammon. "One would think that after such a dose as Edith gave me, she would be satisfied to let me go my way, but no! Not caring for me enough herself to save me from public disgrace, she must now pursue me to keep any other woman from loving me. I call that too much! I am going to see her, and I want you to go with me, father."

"Very well," said Mr. Ammon, "I will go."

When Edith Carr came into her reception room that afternoon, owned for conquest, she expected only Philip, and him penitent. He came hurrying toward him, smiling, radiant, ready to use every allurement she possessed, and paused in dismay when she saw his cold face and his father.

"Why, Phil!" she cried. "When did you come home?"

"I am not at home," answered Philip. "I merely ran up to see my father on business, and to inquire of you what it was you said to Miss Comstock yesterday that caused her to disappear before she could return to the Limberlost."

"Miss Comstock disappear! Impossible!" cried Edith Carr. "Where could she go?"

"I thought perhaps you could answer that, since it was throu you that she went."

"Phil, I haven't the faintest idea where she is," said the g gently.

"But you know perfectly why she went! Kindly tell me tha

"Let me see you alone, and I will."

"Here and now, or not at all."

"Phil!"

"What did you say to the girl I love?"

Then Edith Carr stretched out her arms.

"Phil, I am the girl you love!" she cried. "All your life y have loved me. Surely it cannot be all gone in a few wee of misunderstanding. I was jealous of her! I did not want you leave me an instant that night for any other girl living. That w the moth I was representing. Everyone knew it! I wanted y to bring it to me. When you did not, I knew instantly it had be for her that you worked last summer, she who suggested my dre she who had power to take you from me, when I wanted y most. The thought drove me mad, and I said and did the insane things. Phil, I beg your pardon! I ask your forgivene Yesterday she said that you had told her of me at once. S vowed both of you had been true to me—and Phil, I couldn't lo into her eyes and not see that it was the truth. Oh, Phil, if y understood how I have suffered you would forgive me. Phil never knew how much I cared for you! I will do anything anything!"

"Then tell me what you said to Elnora yesterday that drove h alone and friendless, into the night, heaven knows where!"

"You have no thought for anyone save her?"

"Yes," said Philip. "I have. Because I once loved you, a believed in you, my heart aches for you. I will gladly forgi anything you ask. I will do anything you want, except to resu our former relations. That is impossible. It is hopeless and usel to ask it."

"You truly mean that!"

"Yes."

"Then find out from her what I said!"

"Come, father," said Philip, rising.

"You were going to show Miss Comstock's letter to Edith," suggested Mr. Ammon.

"I have not the slightest interest in Miss Comstock's letter," said Edith Carr.

"You are not even interested in the fact that she says you are not responsible for her going, and that I am to call on you and be friends with you?"

"That is interesting, indeed!" sneered Miss Carr.

She took the letter, read and returned it.

"She has done what she could for my cause, it seems," she said coldly. "How very generous of her! Do you propose calling out Pinkertons and instituting a general search?"

"No," replied Philip. "I simply propose to go back to the Limberlost and live with her mother, until Elnora becomes convinced that I am not courting you, and never shall be. Then, perhaps, she will come home to us. Good-bye. Good luck to you always!"

CHAPTER XXIV

Wherein Edith Carr Wages a Battle, and Hart Henderson Stands Guard

MANY people looked, a few followed, when Edith Carr slowl came down the main street of Mackinac, pausing here and ther to note the glow of color in one small booth after another, over flowing with gay curios. That street of packed white sand, wind ing with the curves of the shore, outlined with brilliant shops, an thronged with laughing, bareheaded people in outing costume was a picturesque and fascinating sight. Thousands annually mad long journeys and paid exorbitant prices to take part in tha pageant.

As Edith Carr passed, she was the most distinguished figure o the old street. Her clinging black gown was sufficiently elaborat for a dinner dress. On her head was a large, wide, drooping brimmed black hat, with immense floating black plumes, whil on the brim, and among the laces on her breast glowed velvety deep red roses. Some way these made up for the lack of color i her cheeks and lips, and while her eyes seemed unnaturally brigh to a close observer they appeared weary. Despite the effort sh made to move lightly she was very tired, and dragged her heav feet with an effort.

She turned at the little street leading to the dock, and wen to meet the big lake steamer plowing up the Straits fron Chicago. Past the landing place, on to the very end of the pier sh went, then sat down, leaned against a dock support and close her tired eyes. When the steamer came very close she languidl

watched the people lining the railing. Instantly she marked one lean anxious face turned toward hers, and with a throb of pity she lifted a hand and waved to Hart Henderson. He was the first man to leave the boat, coming to her instantly. She spread her trailing skirts and motioned him to sit beside her. Silently they looked across the softly lapping water. At last she forced herself to speak to him.

"Did you have a successful trip?"

"I accomplished my purpose."

"You didn't lose any time getting back."

"I never do when I am coming to you."

"Do you want to go to the cottage for anything?"

"No."

"Then let us sit here and wait until the Petoskey steamer comes in. I like to watch the boats. Sometimes I study the faces, if I am not too tired."

"Have you seen any new types today?"

She shook her head. "This has not been an easy day, Hart."

"And it's going to be worse," said Henderson bitterly. "There's no use putting it off. Edith, I saw someone today."

"You should have seen thousands," she said lightly.

"I did. But of them all, only one will be of interest to you."

"Man or woman?"

"Man."

"Where?"

"Lake Shore private hospital."

"An accident?"

"No. Nervous and physical breakdown."

"Phil said he was going back to the Limberlost."

"He went. He was there three weeks, but the strain broke him. He has an old letter in his hands that he has handled until it is ragged. He held it up to me and said: 'You can see for yourself that she says she will be well and happy, but we can't know until we see her again, and that may never be. She may have gone too near that place her father went down, some of that Limberlost thing may have found her in the forest, she may lie dead in some city morgue this instant, waiting for me to find her body.' "

"Hart! For pity's sake stop!"

"I can't," cried Henderson desperately. "I am forced to t you. They are fighting brain fever. He did go back to the swam and he prowled it night and day. The days down there are h now, and the nights wet with dew and cold. He paid no attenti and forgot his food. A fever started and his uncle brought hi home. They've never had a word from her, or found a trace her. Mrs. Comstock thought she had gone to O'Mores' at Gre Rapids, so when Phil broke down she telegraphed there. Th had been gone all summer, so her mother is as anxious as Phil

"The O'Mores are here," said Edith. "I haven't seen a of them, because I haven't gone out much in the few days sin we came, but this is their summer home."

"Edith, they say at the hospital that it will take careful nu ing to save Phil. He is surrounded by stacks of maps and railroa guides. He is trying to frame up a plan to set the entire detecti agency of the country to work. He says he will stay there just tw days longer. The doctors say he will kill himself when he goes. H is a sick man, Edith. His hands are burning and shaky and h breath was hot against my face."

"Why are you telling me?" It was a cry of acute anguish.

"He thinks you know where she is."

"I do not! I haven't an idea! I never dreamed she would g away when she had him in her hand! I should not have done it

"He said it was something you said to her that made her go

"That may be, but it doesn't prove that I know where sh went."

Henderson looked across the water and suffered keenly. A last he turned to Edith and laid a firm, strong hand over her

"Edith," he said, "do you realize how serious this is?"

"I suppose I do."

"Do you want as fine a fellow as Philip driven any further? he leaves that hospital now, and goes out to the exposure an anxiety of a search for her, there will be a tragedy that no aft regrets can avert. Edith, what did you say to Miss Comstock th made her run away from Phil?"

The girl turned her face from him and sat still, but the man gripping her hands and waiting in agony could see that she was haken by the jolting of the heart in her breast.

"Edith, what did you say?"

"What difference can it make?"

"It might furnish some clue to her action."

"It could not possibly."

"Phil thinks so. He has thought so until his brain is worn nough to give way. Tell me, Edith!"

"I told her Phil was mine! That if he were away from her an our and back in my presence, he would be to me as he always as been."

"Edith, did you believe that?"

"I would have staked my life, my soul on it!"

"Do you believe it now?"

There was no answer. Henderson took her other hand and holding both of them firmly he said softly: "Don't mind me, dear. I on't count! I'm just old Hart! You can tell me anything. Do ou still believe that?"

The beautiful head barely moved in negation. Henderson athered both her hands in one of his and stretched an arm across er shoulders to the post to support her. She dragged her hands om him and twisted them together.

"Oh, Hart!" she cried. "It isn't fair! There is a limit! I have ffered my share. Can't you see? Can't you understand?"

"Yes," he panted. "Yes, my girl! Tell me just this one thing yet, nd I'll cheerfully kill anyone who annoys you further. Tell me, dith!"

Then she lifted her big, dull, pain-filled eyes to his and cried: No! I do not believe it now! I know it is not true! I killed his ve for me. It is dead and gone forever. Nothing will revive it! othing in all this world. And that is not all. I did not know how touch the depths of his nature. I never developed in him those ings he was made to enjoy. He admired me. He was proud to with me. He thought, and I thought, that he worshiped me; ut I know now that he never did care for me as he cares for her.

Never! I can see it! I planned to lead society, to make his hom a place sought for my beauty and popularity. She plans to ad vance his political ambitions, to make him comfortable physicall to stimulate his intellect, to bear him a brood of red-faced chi dren. He likes her and her plans as he never did me and min Oh, my soul! Now, are you satisfied?"

She dropped back against his arm exhausted. Henderson hel her and learned what suffering truly means. He fanned her wit his hat, rubbed her cold hands and murmured broken, inco herent things. By and by slow tears slipped from under her close lids, but when she opened them her eyes were dull and hard.

"What a rag one is when the last secret of the soul is torn ou and laid bare!" she cried.

Henderson thrust his handkerchief into her fingers and whis pered, "Edith, the boat has been creeping up. It's very clos Maybe some of our crowd are on it. Hadn't we better slip awa from here before it lands?"

"If I can walk," she said. "Oh, I am so dead tired, Hart!"

"Yes, dear," said Henderson soothingly. "Just try to pass th landing before the boat anchors. If I only dared carry you!"

They struggled through the waiting masses, but directly oppo site the landing there was a backward movement in the happ laughing crowd, the gangplank came down with a slam, an people began hurrying from the boat. Crowded against the fis house on the dock, Henderson could only advance a few step at a time. He was straining every nerve to protect and assi Edith. He saw no one he recognized near them, so he slipped h arm across her back to help support her. He felt her stiffen again him and catch her breath. At the same instant, the clearest, swee est male voice he ever had heard called: "Be careful there, litt men!"

Henderson sent a swift glance toward the boat. Teren O'More had stepped from the gangplank, leading a little daugh ter, so like him, it was comical. There followed a picture no easy to describe. The Angel in the full flower of her beauty, richl dressed, a laugh on her cameo face, the setting sun glinting o her gold hair, escorted by her eldest son, who held her han

tightly and carefully watched her steps. Next came Elnora, dressed with equal richness, a trifle taller and slenderer, almost the same type of coloring, but with different eyes and hair, facial lines and expression. She was led by the second O'More boy who convulsed the crowd by saying: "Tareful, Elnora! Don't 'oo be teppin' in de water!"

People surged around them, purposely closing them in.

"What lovely women! Who are they? It's the O'Mores. The lightest one is his wife. Is that her sister? No, it is his! They say he has a title in England."

Whispers ran fast and audible. As the crowd pressed around the party an opening was left beside the fish sheds. Edith ran down the dock. Henderson sprang after her, catching her arm and assisting her to the street.

"Up the shore! This way!" she panted. "Everyone will go to dinner the first thing they do."

They left the street and started around the beach, but Edith was breathless from running, while the yielding sand made difficult walking.

"Help me!" she cried, clinging to Henderson. He put his arm around her, almost carrying her from sight into a little cove walled by high rocks at the back, while there was a clean floor of white sand, and logs washed from the lake for seats. He found one of these with a back rest, and hurrying down to the water he soaked his handkerchief and carried it to her. She passed it across her lips, over her eyes, and then pressed the palms of her hands upon it. Henderson removed the heavy hat, fanned her with his, and wet the handkerchief again.

"Hart, what makes you?" she said wearily. "My mother doesn't care. She says this is good for me. Do you think this is good for me, Hart?"

"Edith, you know I would give my life if I could save you this," he said, and could not speak further.

She leaned against him, closed her eyes and lay silent so long the man fell into panic.

"Edith, you are not unconscious?" he whispered, touching her.

"No. Just resting. Please don't leave me."

He held her carefully, gently fanning her. She was sufferin almost more than either of them could endure.

"I wish you had your boat," she said at last. "I want to sa with the wind in my face."

"There is no wind. I can bring my motor around in a few mi utes."

"Then get it."

"Lie on the sand. I can 'phone from the first booth. It won take but a little while."

Edith lay on the white sand, and Henderson covered her fa with her hat. Then he ran to the nearest booth and talked in peratively. Presently he was back bringing a hot drink that w stimulating. Shortly the motor ran close to the beach and stoppe Henderson's servant brought a rowboat ashore and took them the launch. It was filled with cushions and wraps. Henders made a couch and soon, warmly covered, Edith sped out over t water in search of peace.

Hour after hour the boat ran up and down the shore. T moon arose and the night air grew very chilly. Henderson p on an overcoat and piled more covers on Edith.

"You must take me home," she said at last. "The folks will uneasy."

He was compelled to take her to the cottage with the batt still raging. He went back early the next morning, but alread she had wandered out over the island. Instinctively Henders felt that the shore would attract her. There was something in t tumult of rough little Huron's waves that called to him. It w there he found her, crouching so close the water the foam w dampening her skirts.

"May I stay?" he asked.

"I have been hoping you would come," she answered. "It bad enough when you are here, but it is a little easier than bea ing it alone."

"Thank God for that!" said Henderson sitting beside he "Shall I talk to you?"

She shook her head. So they sat by the hour. At last she spok "Of course, you know there is something I have got to do, Hart

"You have not!" cried Henderson violently. "That's all nonense! Give me just one word of permission. That is all that is required of you."

" 'Required?' You grant, then, that there is something 'required?' "

"One word. Nothing more."

"Did you ever know one word could be so big, so black, so desperately bitter? Oh, Hart!"

"No."

"But you know it now, Hart!"

"Yes."

"And still you say that it is 'required?' "

Henderson suffered unspeakably. At last he said: "If you had seen and heard him, Edith, you, too, would feel that it is required.' Remember——"

"No! No! No!" she cried. "Don't ask me to remember even the least of my pride and folly. Let me forget!"

She sat silent for a long time.

"Will you go with me?" she whispered.

"Of course."

At last she arose.

"I might as well give up and have it over," she faltered.

That was the first time in her life that Edith Carr ever had proposed to give up anything she wanted.

"Help me, Hart!"

Henderson started around the beach assisting her all he could. Finally he stopped.

"Edith, there is no sense in this! You are too tired to go. You know you can trust me. You wait in any of these lovely places and send me. You will be safe, and I'll run. One word is all that necessary."

"But I've got to say that word myself, Hart!"

"Then write it, and let me carry it. The message is not going to prove who went to the office and sent it."

"That is quite true," she said, dropping wearily, but she made no movement to take the pen and paper he offered.

"Hart, you write it," she said at last.

Henderson turned away his face. He gripped the pen, while h breath sucked between his dry teeth.

"Certainly!" he said when he could speak. "Mackinac, Augu 27, 1908. Philip Ammon, Lake Shore Hospital, Chicago." H paused with suspended pen and glanced at Edith. Her white li were working, but no sound came. "Miss Comstock is with th Terence O'Mores, on Mackinac Island," prompted Henderso

Edith nodded.

"Signed, Henderson," continued the big man.

Edith shook her head.

"Say, 'She is well and happy,' and sign, Edith Carr!" sh panted.

"Not on your life!" flashed Henderson.

"For the love of mercy, Hart, don't make this any harder! is the least I can do, and it takes every ounce of strength in m to do it."

"Will you wait for me here?" he asked.

She nodded, and, pulling his hat lower over his eyes, Hende son ran around the shore. In less than an hour he was back. H helped her a little farther to where the Devil's Kitchen lay c into the rocks; it furnished places to rest, and cool water. Befo long his man came with the boat. From it they spread blankets o the sand for her, and made chafing-dish tea. She tried to refuse i but the fragrance overcame her for she drank ravenously. The Henderson cooked several dishes and spread an appetizing lunc She was young, strong, and almost famished for food. She w forced to eat. That made her feel much better. Then Henderso helped her into the boat and ran it through shady coves of th shore, where there were refreshing breezes. When she fell aslee the girl did not know, but the man did. Sadly in need of rest hin self, he ran that boat for five hours through quiet bays, awa from noisy parties, and where the shade was cool and deep. Whe she awoke he took her home, and as they went she knew that sh had been mistaken. She would not die. Her heart was not eve broken. She had suffered horribly; she would suffer more; bu eventually the pain must wear out. Into her head crept a few lin of an old opera:

"Hearts do not break, they sting and ache,
For old love's sake, but do not die,
As witnesseth the living I."

That evening they were sailing down the Straits before a stiff breeze and Henderson was busy with the tiller when she said to him: "Hart, I want you to do something more for me."

"You have only to tell me," he said.

"Have I only to tell you, Hart?" she asked softly.

"Haven't you learned that yet, Edith?"

"I want you to go away."

"Very well," he said quietly, but his face whitened visibly.

"You say that as if you had been expecting it."

"I have. I knew from the beginning that when this was over you would dislike me for having seen you suffer. I have grown my Gethsemane in a full realization of what was coming, but I could not leave you, Edith, so long as it seemed to me that I was serving you. Does it make any difference to you where I go?"

"I want you where you will be loved, and good care taken of you."

"Thank you!" said Henderson, smiling grimly. "Have you any idea where such a spot might be found?"

"It should be with your sister at Los Angeles. She always has seemed very fond of you."

"That is quite true," said Henderson, his eyes brightening a little. "I will go to her. When shall I start?"

"At once."

Henderson began to tack for the landing, but his hands shook until he scarcely could manage the boat. Edith Carr sat watching him indifferently, but her heart was throbbing painfully. "Why is there so much suffering in the world?" she kept whispering to herself. Inside her door Henderson took her by the shoulders almost roughly.

"For how long is this, Edith, and how are you going to say good-bye to me?"

She raised tired, pain-filled eyes to his.

"I don't know for how long it is," she said. "It seems now as

if it had been a slow eternity. I wish to my soul that God woul
be merciful to me and make something 'snap' in my heart, a
there did in Phil's, that would give me rest. I don't know for ho
long, but I'm perfectly shameless with you, Hart. If peace eve
comes and I want you, I won't wait for you to find it out yoursel
I'll cable, Marconigraph, anything. As for how I say good-by
any way you please. I don't care in the least what happens t
me."

Henderson studied her intently.

"In that case, we will shake hands," he said. "Good-bye, Editl
Don't forget that every hour I am thinking of you and hoping a
good things will come to you soon."

CHAPTER XXV

Wherein Philip Finds Elnora, and Edith Carr Offers a Yellow Emperor

"Oh, I need my own violin," cried Elnora. "This one may be a housand times more expensive, and much older than mine; but t wasn't inspired and taught to sing by a man who knew how. t doesn't know 'beans,' as mother would say, about the Limberlost."

The guests in the O'More music room laughed appreciatively.

"Why don't you write your mother to come for a visit and ring yours?" suggested Freckles.

"I did that three days ago," acknowledged Elnora. "I am half xpecting her on the noon boat. That is one reason why this vion grows worse every minute. There is nothing at all the matter ith me."

"Splendid!" cried the Angel. "I've begged and begged her to o it. I know how anxious these mothers become. When did you end? What made you? Why didn't you tell me?"

"'When?' Three days ago. 'What made me?' You. 'Why idn't I tell you?' Because I can't be sure in the least that she will ome. Mother is the most individual person. She never does what veryone expects she will. She may not come, and I didn't want ou to be disappointed."

"How did I make you?" asked the Angel.

"Loving Alice. It made me realize that if you cared for your rl like that, with Mr. O'More and three other children, possiy my mother, with no one, might like to see me. I know I want

to see her, and you had told me to so often, I just sent for he
Oh, I do hope she comes! I want her to see this lovely place."

"I have been wondering what you thought of Mackinac," sa
Freckles.

"Oh, it is a perfect picture, all of it! I should like to hang it
the wall, so I could see it whenever I wanted to; but it isn't rea
of course; it's nothing but a picture."

"These people won't agree with you," smiled Freckles.

"That isn't necessary," retorted Elnora. "They know this, ar
they love it; but you and I are acquainted with something diffe
ent. The Limberlost is life. Here it is a carefully kept park. Yo
motor, sail, and golf, all so secure and fine. But what I like is th
excitement of choosing a path carefully, in the fear that the qua
mire may reach out and suck me down; to go into the swam
naked-handed and wrest from it treasures that bring me boo
and clothing, and I like enough of a fight for things that I alwa
remember how I got them. I even enjoy seeing a canny old vu
ture eyeing me as if it were saying: 'Ware the sting of the rattle
lest I pick your bones as I did old Limber's.' I like sufficient da
ger to put an edge on life. This is so tame. I should have loved
when all the homes were cabins, and watchers for the stealth
Indian canoes patrolled the shores. You wait until mother come
and if my violin isn't angry with me for leaving it, tonight w
shall sing you the Song of the Limberlost. You shall hear the bi
gold bees over the red, yellow, and purple flowers, bird son
wind talk, and the whispers of Sleepy Snake Creek, as it goes pa
you. You will know!" Elnora turned to Freckles.

He nodded. "Who better?" he asked. "This is secure while th
children are so small, but when they grow larger, we are goin
farther north, into real forest, where they can learn self-relianc
and develop backbone."

Elnora laid away the violin. "Come along, children," she sai
"We must get at that backbone business at once. Let's race to th
playhouse."

With the brood at her heels Elnora ran, and for an hour livel
sounds stole from the remaining spot of forest on the Islan
which lay beside the O'More cottage. Then Terry went to th

playroom to bring Alice her doll. He came racing back, dragging it by one leg, and crying: "There's company! Someone has come that mamma and papa are just tearing down the house over. I saw through the window."

"It could not be my mother, yet," mused Elnora. "Her boat is not due until twelve. Terry, give Alice that doll——"

"It's a man-person, and I don't know him, but my father is shaking his hand right straight along, and my mother is running for a hot drink and a cushion. It's a kind of a sick person, but they are going to make him well right away, anyone can see that. This is the best place. I'll go tell him to come lie on the pine needles in the sun and watch the sails go by. That will fix him!"

"Watch sails go by," chanted Little Brother. "'A fix him! Elnora fix him, won't you?"

"I don't know about that," answered Elnora. "What sort of person is he, Terry?"

"A beautiful white person; but my father is going to 'color him up,' I heard him say so. He's just out of the hospital, and he is a bad person, 'cause he ran away from the doctors and made them awful angry. But father and mother are going to doctor him better. I didn't know they could make sick people well."

"'Ey do anyfing!" boasted Little Brother.

Before Elnora missed her, Alice, who had gone to investigate, came flying across the shadows and through the sunshine waving paper. She thrust it into Elnora's hand.

"There is a man-person—a stranger-person!" she shouted. But he knows you! He sent you that! You are to be the doctor! He said so! Oh, do hurry! I like him heaps!"

Elnora read Edith Carr's telegram to Philip Ammon and understood that he had been ill, that she had been located by Edith who had notified him. In so doing she had acknowledged defeat. At last Philip was free. Elnora looked up with a radiant face.

"I like him 'heaps' myself!" she cried. "Come on, children, we will go tell him so."

Terry and Alice ran, but Elnora had to suit her steps to Little Brother, who was her loyal esquire, and would have been heart-broken over desertion and insulted at being carried. He was

rather dragged, but he was arriving, and the emergency w
great, he could see that.

"She's coming!" shouted Alice.

"She's going to be the doctor!" cried Terry.

"She looked just like she'd seen angels when she read the le
ter," explained Alice.

"She likes you 'heaps'! She said so!" danced Terry. "Be wa
ing! Here she is!"

Elnora helped Little Brother up the steps, then deserted hi
and came at a rush. The stranger-person stood holding o
trembling arms.

"Are you sure, at last, runaway?" asked Philip Ammon.

"Perfectly sure!" cried Elnora.

"Will you marry me now?"

"This instant! That is, any time after the noon boat comes in

"Why such unnecessary delay?" demanded Ammon.

"It is almost September," explained Elnora. "I sent for moth
three days ago. We must wait until she comes, and we either ha
to send for Uncle Wesley and Aunt Margaret, or go to them.
couldn't possibly be married properly without those dear people

"We will send," decided Ammon. "The trip will be a treat f
them. O'More, would you get off a message at once?"

Everyone met the noon boat. They went in the motor becau
Philip was too weak to walk so far. As soon as people could
distinguished at all Elnora and Philip sighted an erect figure, wi
a head like a snowdrift. When the gangplank fell the first pers
across it was a lean, red-haired boy of eleven, carrying a violin
one hand and an enormous bouquet of yellow marigolds a
purple asters in the other. He was beaming with broad smi
until he saw Philip. Then his expression changed.

"Aw, say!" he exclaimed reproachfully. "I bet you Aunt Ma
garet is right. He is going to be your beau!"

Elnora stooped to kiss Billy as she caught her mother.

"There, there!" cried Mrs. Comstock. "Don't knock my hea
gear into my eye. I'm not sure I've got either hat or hair. T
wind blew like bizzem coming up the river."

She shook out her skirts, straightened her hat, and came fo

ward to meet Philip, who took her into his arms and kissed her repeatedly. Then he passed her along to Freckles and the Angel to whom her greetings were mingled with scolding and laughter over her wind-blown hair.

"No doubt I'm a precious spectacle!" she said to the Angel. "I saw your pa a little before I started, and he sent you a note. It's in my satchel. He said he was coming up next week. What a lot of people there are in this world! And what on earth are all of them laughing about? Did none of them ever hear of sickness, or sorrow, or death? Billy, don't you go to playing Indian or chasing woodchucks until you get out of those clothes. I promised Margaret I'd bring back that suit good as new."

Then the O'More children came crowding to meet Elnora's mother.

"Merry Christmas!" cried Mrs. Comstock, gathering them in. "Got everything right here but the tree, and there seems to be plenty of them a little higher up. If this wind would stiffen just enough more to blow away the people, so one could see this place, I believe it would be right decent looking."

"See here," whispered Elnora to Philip. "You must fix this with Billy. I can't have his trip spoiled."

"Now, here is where I dust the rest of 'em!" complacently remarked Mrs. Comstock, as she climbed into the motor car for her first ride, in company with Philip and Little Brother. "I have been the one to trudge the roads and hop out of the way of these things for quite a spell."

She sat very erect as the car rolled into the broad main avenue, where only stray couples were walking. Her eyes began to twinkle and gleam. Suddenly she leaned forward and touched the driver on the shoulder.

"Young man," she said, "just you toot that horn suddenly and shave close enough a few of those people, so that I can see how I look when I leap for ragweed and snake fences."

The amazed chauffeur glanced questioningly at Philip, who slightly nodded. A second later there was a quick "honk!" and a curve at a corner. A man engrossed in conversation grabbed the woman to whom he was talking and dashed for the safety of a

lawn. The woman tripped in her skirts, and as she fell the ma caught and dragged her. Both of them turned red faces to the ca and berated the driver. Mrs. Comstock laughed in unrestraine enjoyment. Then she touched the chauffeur again.

"That's enough," she said. "It seems a mite risky." A minut later she added to Philip, "If only they had been carrying si pounds of butter and ten dozen eggs apiece, wouldn't that hav been just perfect?"

Billy had wavered between Elnora and the motor, but h loyal little soul had been true to her, so the walk to the cottag began with him at her side. Long before they arrived the litt O'Mores had crowded around and captured Billy, and he wa giving them an expurgated version of Mrs. Comstock's tales c Big Foot and Adam Poe, boasting that Uncle Wesley had bee in the camps of Me-shin-go-me-sia and knew Wa-ca-co-nah b fore he got religion and dressed like white men; while the might prowess of Snap as a woodchuck hunter was done full justic When they reached the cottage Philip took Billy aside, showe him the emerald ring and gravely asked his permission to marr Elnora. Billy struggled to be just, but it was going hard with hin when Alice, who kept close enough to hear, intervened.

"Why don't you let them get married?" she asked. "You ar much too small for her. You wait for me!"

Billy studied her intently. At last he turned to Ammon. "Av well! Go on, then!" he said gruffly. "I'll marry Alice!"

Alice reached her hand. "If you got that settled let's put on ou Indian clothes, call the boys, and go to the playhouse."

"I haven't got any Indian clothes," said Billy ruefully.

"Yes, you have," explained Alice. "Father bought you som coming from the dock. You can put them on in the playhous The boys do."

Billy examined the playhouse with gleaming eyes. Never ha he encountered such possibilities. He could see a hundred amu ing things to try, and he could not decide which to do first. Th most immediate attraction seemed to be a dead pine, held pe pendicularly by its fellows, while its bark had decayed and falle leaving a bare, smooth trunk.

"If we just had some grease that would make the dandiest pole to play Fourth of July with!" he shouted.

The children remembered the Fourth. It had been great fun.

"Butter is grease. There is plenty in the 'frigerator," suggested Alice, speeding away.

Billy caught the cold roll and began to rub it against the tree excitedly.

"How are you going to get it greased to the top?" inquired Terry.

Billy's face lengthened. "That's so!" he said. "The thing is to begin at the top and grease down. I'll show you!"

Billy put the butter in his handkerchief and took the corners between his teeth. He climbed the pole, greasing it as he slid down.

"Now, I got to try first," he said, "because I'm the biggest and so I have the best chance; only the one that goes first hasn't hardly any chance at all, because he has to wipe off the grease on himself, so the others can get up at last. See?"

"All right!" said Terry. "You go first and then I will and then Alice. Phew! It's slick. He'll never get up."

Billy wrestled manfully, and when he was exhausted he boosted Terry, and then both of them helped Alice, to whom they awarded a prize of her own doll. As they rested Billy remembered.

"Do your folks keep cows?" he asked.

"No, we buy milk," said Terry.

"Gee! Then what about the butter? Maybe your ma needs it for dinner!"

"No, she doesn't!" cried Alice. "There's stacks of it! I can have all the butter I want."

"Well, I'm mighty glad of it!" said Billy. "I didn't just think. I'm afraid we've greased our clothes, too."

"That's no difference," said Terry. "We can play what we please in these things."

"Well, we ought to be all dirty, and bloody, and have feathers on us to be real Indians," said Billy.

Alice tried a handful of dirt on her sleeve and it streaked beautifully. Instantly all of them began smearing themselves.

"If we only had feathers," lamented Billy.

Terry disappeared and shortly returned from the garage with a feather duster. Billy fell on it with a shriek. Around each one's head he firmly tied a twisted handkerchief, and stuck inside it a row of stiffly upstanding feathers.

"Now, if we just only had some pokeberries to paint us red we'd be real, for sure enough Indians, and we could go on the warpath and fight all the other tribes and burn a lot of them at the stake."

Alice sidled up to him. "Would huckleberries do?" she asked softly.

"Yes!" shouted Terry, wild with excitement. "Anything that's a color."

Alice made another trip to the refrigerator. Billy crushed the berries in his hands and smeared and streaked all their faces liberally.

"Now are we ready?" asked Alice.

Billy collapsed. "I forgot the ponies! You got to ride ponies to go on the warpath!"

"You ain't neither!" contradicted Terry. "It's the very latest style to go on the warpath in a motor. Everybody does! They go everywhere in them. They are much faster and better than any old ponies."

Billy gave one genuine whoop. "Can we take your motor?"

Terry hesitated.

"I suppose you are too little to run it?" said Billy.

"I am not!" flashed Terry. "I know how to start and stop it and I drive lots for Stephens. It is hard to turn over the engine when you start."

"I'll turn it," volunteered Billy. "I'm strong as anything."

"Maybe it will start without. If Stephens has just been running it, sometimes it will. Come on, let's try."

Billy straightened up, lifted his chin and cried: "Houpe Houpe! Houpe!"

The little O'Mores stared in amazement.

"Why don't you come on and whoop?" demanded Billy. "Don't you know how? You are great Indians! You got to whoop before you go on the warpath. You ought to kill a bat, too, and see if the wind is right. But maybe the engine won't run if we wait to do that. You can whoop, anyway. All together now!"

They did whoop, and after several efforts the cry satisfied Billy, so he led the way to the big motor, and took the front seat with Terry. Alice and Little Brother climbed into the back.

"Will it go?" asked Billy, "or do we have to turn it?"

"It will go," said Terry as the machine gently slid out into the avenue and started under his guidance.

"This is no warpath!" scoffed Billy. "We got to go a lot faster than this, and we got to whoop. Alice, why don't you whoop?"

Alice arose, took hold of the seat in front and whooped.

"If I open the throttle, I can't squeeze the bulb to scare people out of our way," said Terry. "I can't steer and squeeze, too."

"We'll whoop enough to get them out of the way. Go faster!" urged Billy.

Billy also stood, lifted his chin and whooped like the wildest little savage that ever came out of the West. Alice and Little Brother added their voices, and when he was not absorbed with the steering gear, Terry joined in.

"Faster!" shouted Billy.

Intoxicated with the speed and excitement, Terry threw the throttle wider and the big car leaped forward and sped down the avenue. In it four black, feather-bedecked children whooped in wild glee until suddenly Terry's war cry changed to a scream of panic.

"The lake is coming!"

"Stop!" cried Billy. "Stop! Why don't you stop?"

Paralyzed with fear Terry clung to the steering gear and the car sped onward.

"You little fool! Why don't you stop?" screamed Billy, catching Terry's arm. "Tell me how to stop!"

A bicycle shot beside them and Freckles standing on the pedals shouted: "Pull out the pin in that little circle at your feet!"

Billy fell on his knees and tugged and the pin yielded at last.

Just as the wheels struck the white sand the bicycle sheered clos
Freckles caught the lever and with one strong shove set th
brake. The water flew as the car struck Huron, but luckily it wa
shallow and the beach smooth. Hub deep, the big motor stoo
quivering as Freckles climbed in and backed it to dry sand.

Then he drew a deep breath and stared at his brood.

"Terence, would you kindly be explaining?" he said at las

Billy looked at the panting little figure of Terry.

"I guess I better," he said. "We were playing Indians on th
warpath, and we hadn't any ponies, and Terry said it was all th
style to go in automobiles now, so we——"

Freckles's head went back, and he did some whooping himsel

"I wonder if you realize how nearly you came to being fou
drowned children?" he said gravely, after a time.

"Oh, I think I could swim enough to get most of us out," sai
Billy. "Anyway, we need washing."

"You do indeed," said Freckles. "I will head this processio
to the garage, and there we will remove the first coat." For th
remainder of Billy's visit the nurse, chauffeur, and every servant
the O'More household had something of importance on the
minds, and Billy's every step was shadowed.

"I have Billy's consent," said Philip to Elnora, "and all th
other consent you have stipulated. Before you think of som
thing more, give me your left hand, please."

Elnora gave it gladly, and the emerald slipped on her finge
Then they went together into the forest to tell each other a
about it, and talk it over.

"Have you seen Edith?" asked Philip.

"No," answered Elnora. "But she must be here, or she ma
have seen me when we went to Petoskey a few days ago. He
people have a cottage over on the bluff, but the Angel never tol
me until today. I didn't want to make that trip, but the foll
were so anxious to entertain me, and it was only a few days unt
I intended to let you know myself where I was."

"And I was going to wait just that long, and if I didn't hea
then I was getting ready to turn over the country. I can scarce
realize yet that Edith sent me that telegram."

"No wonder! It's a difficult thing to believe. I can't express how I feel for her."

"Let us never speak of it again," said Philip. "I came nearer feeling sorry for her last night than I have yet. I couldn't sleep on that boat coming over, and I couldn't put away the thought of what sending that message cost her. I never would have believed it possible that she would do it. But it is done. We will forget it."

"I scarcely think I shall," said Elnora. "It is something I like to remember. How suffering must have changed her! I would give anything to bring her peace."

"Henderson came to see me at the hospital a few days ago. He's gone a rather wild pace, but if he had been held from youth by the love of a good woman he might have lived differently. There are things about him one cannot help admiring."

"I think he loves her," said Elnora softly.

"He does! He always has! He never made any secret of it. He will cut in now and do his level best, but he told me that he thought she would send him away. He understands her thoroughly."

Edith Carr did not understand herself. She went to her room after her good-bye to Henderson, lay on her bed and tried to think why she was suffering as she was.

"It is all my selfishness, my unrestrained temper, my pride in my looks, my ambition to be first," she said. "That is what has caused this trouble."

Then she went deeper.

"How does it happen that I am so selfish, that I never controlled my temper, that I thought beauty and social position the vital things of life?" she muttered. "I think that goes a little past me. I think a mother who allows a child to grow up as I did, who educates it only for the frivolities of life, has a share in that child's finding. I think my mother has some responsibility in this," Edith Carr whispered to the night. "But she will recognize none. She would laugh at me if I tried to tell her what I have suffered and the bitter, bitter lesson I have learned. No one really cares, but Carr. I've sent him away, so there is no one! No one!"

Edith pressed her fingers across her burning eyes and lay still.

"He is gone!" she whispered at last. "He would go at once. H would not see me again. I should think he never would want t see me any more. But I will want to see him! My soul! I wan him now! I want him every minute! He is all I have. And I'v sent him away. Oh, these dreadful days to come, alone! I can' bear it. Hart! Hart!" she cried aloud. "I want you! No one care but you. No one understands but you. Oh, I want you!"

She sprang from her bed and felt her way to her desk.

"Get me someone at the Henderson cottage," she said to Cen tral, and waited shivering.

"They don't answer."

"They are there! You must get them. Turn on the buzzer."

After a time the sleepy voice of Mrs. Henderson answered.

"Has Hart gone?" panted Edith Carr.

"No! He came in late and began to talk about starting to Cali fornia. He hasn't slept in weeks to amount to anything. I put hin to bed. There is time enough to start to California when he awak ens. Edith, what are you planning to do next with that boy o mine?"

"Will you tell him I want to see him before he goes?"

"Yes, but I won't wake him."

"I don't want you to. Just tell him in the morning."

"Very well."

"You will be sure?"

"Sure!"

Hart was not gone. Edith fell asleep. She arose at noon th next day, took a cold bath, ate her breakfast, dressed carefully and leaving word that she had gone to the forest, she walke slowly across the leaves. It was cool and quiet there, so she sa where she could see him coming, and waited. She was thinkin deep and fast.

Henderson came swiftly down the path. A long sleep, food and Edith's message had done him good. He had dressed in ne light flannels that were becoming. Edith arose and went to mee him.

"Let us walk in the forest," she said.

They passed the old Catholic graveyard, and entered th

deepest wood of the Island, where all shadows were green, all voices of humanity ceased, and there was no sound save the whispering of the trees, a few bird notes and squirrel rustle. There Edith seated herself on a mossy old log, and Henderson studied her. He could detect a change. She was still pale and her eyes tired, but the dull, strained look was gone. He wanted to hope, but he did not dare. Any other man would have forced her to speak. The mighty tenderness in Henderson's heart shielded her in every way.

"What have you thought of that you wanted yet, Edith?" he asked lightly as he stretched himself at her feet.

"You!"

Henderson lay tense and very still.

"Well, I am here!"

"Thank Heaven for that!"

Henderson sat up suddenly, leaning toward her with questioning eyes. Not knowing what he dared say, afraid of the hope which found birth in his heart, he tried to shield her and at the same time to feel his way.

"I am more thankful than I can express that you feel so," he said. "I would be of use, of comfort, to you if I knew how, Edith."

"You are my only comfort," she said. "I tried to send you away. I thought I didn't want you. I thought I couldn't bear the sight of you, because of what you have seen me suffer. But I went to the root of this thing last night, Hart, and with self in mind, as usual, I found that I could not live without you."

Henderson began breathing lightly. He was afraid to speak or move.

"I faced the fact that all this is my own fault," continued Edith, "and came through my own selfishness. Then I went farther back and realized that I am as I was reared. I don't want to blame my parents, but I was carefully trained into what I am. If Elnora Comstock had been like me, Phil would have come back to me. I can see how selfish I seem to him, and how I appear to you, if you would admit it."

"Edith," said Henderson desperately, "there is no use to try to deceive you. You have known from the first that I found you

wrong in this. But it's the first time in your life I ever thought you wrong about anything—and it's the only time I ever shall. Understand, I think you the bravest, most beautiful woman on earth, the one most worth loving."

"I'm not to be considered in the same class with her."

"I don't grant that, but if I did, you must remember how I compare with Phil. He's my superior at every point. There's no use in discussing that. You wanted to see me, Edith. What did you want?"

"I wanted you to not go away."

"Not at all?"

"Not at all! Not ever! Not unless you take me with you, Hart."

She slightly extended one hand to him. Henderson took that hand, kissing it again and again.

"Anything you want, Edith," he said brokenly. "Just as you wish it. Do you want me to stay here, and go on as we have been?"

"Yes, only with a difference."

"Can you tell me, Edith?"

"First, I want you to know that you are the dearest thing on earth to me, right now. I would give up everything else, before I would you. I can't honestly say that I love you with the love you deserve. My heart is too sore. It's too soon to know. But I love you some way. You are necessary to me. You are my comfort, my shield. If you want me, as you know me to be, Hart, you may consider me yours. I give you my word of honor I will try to be as you would have me, just as soon as I can."

Henderson kissed her hand passionately. "Don't, Edith," he begged. "Don't say those things. I can't bear it. I understand. Everything will come right in time. Love like mine must bring a reward. You will love me some day. I can wait. I am the most patient fellow."

"But I must say it," cried Edith. "I—I think, Hart, that I have been on the wrong road to find happiness. I planned to finish life as I started it with Phil; and you see how glad he was to change. He wanted the other sort of girl far more than he ever

wanted me. And you, Hart, honest, now—I'll know if you don't tell me the truth! Would you rather have a wife as I planned to live life with Phil, or would you rather have her as Elnora Comstock intends to live with him?"

"Edith!" cried the man, "Edith!"

"Of course, you can't say it in plain English," said the girl. "You are far too chivalrous for that. You needn't say anything. I am answered. If you could have your choice you wouldn't have a society wife, either. In your heart you'd like the smaller home of comfort, the furtherance of your ambitions, the palatable meals regularly served, and little children around you. I am sick of all we have grown up to, Hart. When your hour of trouble comes, there is no comfort for you. I am tired to death. You find out what you want to do, and be, that is a man's work in the world, and I will plan our home, with no thought save your comfort. I'll be the other kind of a girl, as fast as I can learn. I can't correct all my faults in one day, but I'll change as rapidly as I can."

"God knows, I will be different, too, Edith. You shall not be the only generous one. I will make all the rest of life worthy of you. I will change, too!"

"Don't you dare!" said Edith Carr, taking his head between her hands and holding it against her knees, while the tears slid down her cheeks. "Don't you dare change, you big-hearted, splendid lover! I am little and selfish. You are the very finest, just as you are!"

Henderson was not talking then, so they sat through a long silence. At last he heard Edith draw a quick breath, and lifting his head he looked where she pointed. Up a fern stalk climbed a curious-looking object. They watched breathlessly. By lavender feet clung a big, pursy, lavender-splotched, yellow body. Yellow and lavender wings began to expand and take on color. Every instant great beauty became more apparent. It was one of those double-brooded freaks, which do occur on rare occasions, or merely an Eacles Imperialis moth that in the cool damp northern forest had failed to emerge in June. Edith Carr drew back

with a long, shivering breath. Henderson caught her hands and gripped them firmly. Steadily she looked the thought of her heart into his eyes.

"By all the powers, you shall not!" swore the man. "You have done enough. I will smash that thing!"

"Oh no you won't!" cried the girl, clinging to his hands. "I am not big enough yet, Hart, but before I leave this forest I shall have grown to breadth and strength to carry that to her. She needs two of each kind. Phil only sent her one!"

"Edith, I can't bear it! That's not demanded! Let me take it!"

"You may go with me. I know where the O'Mores' cottage is. I have been there often."

"I'll say you sent it!"

"You may watch me deliver it!"

"Phil may be there by now."

"I hope he is! I should like him to see me do one decent thing by which to remember me."

"I tell you that is not necessary!"

"'Not necessary!'" cried the girl, her big eyes shining. "Not necessary? Then what on earth is the thing doing here? I just have boasted that I would change, that I would be like her, that I would grow bigger and broader. As the words are spoken God gives me the opportunity to prove whether I am sincere. This is my test, Hart! Don't you see? If I am big enough to carry that to her, you will believe that there is some good in me. You will not be loving me in vain. This is an especial Providence, man. Be my strength! Help me, as you always have done!"

Henderson arose and shook the leaves from his clothing. He drew Edith Carr to her feet and carefully picked the mosses from her skirts. He went to the water and moistened his handkerchief to bathe her face.

"Now a dust of powder," he said when the tears were washed away.

From a tiny book Edith tore leaves that she passed over her face.

"All gone!" cried Henderson, critically studying her. "You look almost half as lovely as you really are!"

Edith Carr drew a wavering breath. She stretched one hand to him.

"Hold tight, Hart!" she said. "I know they handle these things, but I would quite as soon touch a snake."

Henderson clenched his teeth and held steadily. The moth had emerged too recently to be troublesome. It climbed on her fingers quietly and obligingly clung there without moving. So hand in hand they went down the dark forest path. When they came to the avenue, the first person they met paused with an ejaculation of wonder. The next stopped also, and everyone following. They could make little progress on account of marveling, interested people. A strange excitement took possession of Edith. She began to feel proud of the moth.

"Do you know," she said to Henderson, "this is growing easier every step. Its clinging is not disagreeable, as I thought it would be. I feel as if I were saving it, protecting it. I am proud that we are taking it to be put into a collection or a book. It seems like doing a thing worth while. Oh, Hart, I wish we could work together at something for which people would care as they seem to for this. Hear what they say! See them lift their little children to look at it!"

"Edith, if you don't stop," said Henderson, "I will take you in my arms here on the avenue. You are adorable!"

"Don't you dare!" laughed Edith Carr. The color rushed to her cheeks and a new light leaped in her eyes.

"Oh, Hart!" she cried. "Let's work! Let's do something! That's the way she makes people love her so. There's the place, and thank goodness, there is a crowd."

"You darling!" whispered Henderson as they passed up the walk. Her face was rose-flushed with excitement and her eyes shone.

"Hello, everyone!" she cried as she came on the wide veranda. Only see what we found up in the forest! We thought you might like to have it for some of your collections."

She held out the moth as she walked straight to Elnora, who rose to meet her, crying: "How perfectly splendid! I don't even know how to begin to thank you."

Elnora took the moth. Edith shook hands with all of them and asked Philip if he were improving. She said a few polite words to Freckles and the Angel, declined to remain on account of an engagement, and went away, gracefully.

"Well, bully for her!" said Mrs. Comstock. "She's a little thoroughbred after all!"

"That was a mighty big thing for her to be doing," said Freckles in a hushed voice.

"If you knew her as well as I do," said Philip Ammon, "you would have a better conception of what that cost."

"It was a terror!" cried the Angel. "I never could have done it."

" 'Never could have done it!' " echoed Freckles. "Why, Angel, dear, that is the one thing of all the world you would have done!"

"I have to take care of this," faltered Elnora, hurrying toward the door to hide the tears which were rolling down her cheeks.

"I must help," said Philip, disappearing also. "Elnora," he called, catching up with her, "take me where I may cry, too. Wasn't she great?"

"Superb!" exclaimed Elnora. "I have no words. I feel so humbled!"

"So do I," said Philip. "I think a brave deed like that always makes one feel so. Now are you happy?"

"Unspeakably happy!" answered Elnora.

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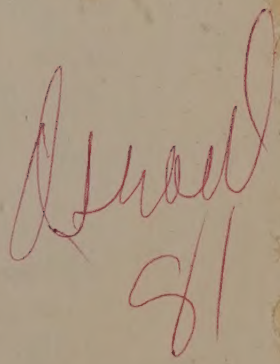
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